



CHILD CARE LICENSING

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The agency's Child Care Licensing Division (CCL) is responsible for protecting the health, safety, and well-being of Texas children who attend or reside in regulated child-care facilities. Roughly 18.1 percent of Texas' more than 4.3 million children age birth to 13 years old are in some kind of out-of-home care provided by day-care centers, kindergartens and nursery schools, drop-in care centers, listed or registered family homes, and group day-care homes.

CCL also regulates child-care administrators, foster homes, child-care institutions, child-placing agencies and maternity homes. In addition, 24-hour residential care facilities are licensed to care for 22,101 children.

Criminal Background Checks/Listed Family Homes

The agency in 1998 implemented a new law requiring criminal background checks of family home providers who care for three or fewer children. Previously, only family home providers who cared for four or more children in addition to their own were registered by the state.

The new law, which went into effect in January 1998, created the "listed" family home, a new category of child care. Anyone who is paid to provide regular child care in their own homes for one to three children not related to them must now list with the agency. Listing with the agency requires a background check for criminal history and child abuse and neglect.

Neither PRS nor any other entity had a means to determine how many of the state's unregulated family home providers would be covered by this new law. The agency mounted a public awareness and outreach effort to inform parents and providers about the new law. During Fiscal Year 1998, 1,163 family homes in this category were approved to list with PRS.

In the past, the agency has conducted criminal history checks of directors, owners and staff of licensed child-care facilities and registered family home providers. The agency has also checked directors and owners against its central database of people who have abused or neglected children. All background checks were conducted only upon initial application.

In Fiscal Year 1998, the agency began checking all child-care employees against its child abuse and neglect database with plans for rechecking every 24

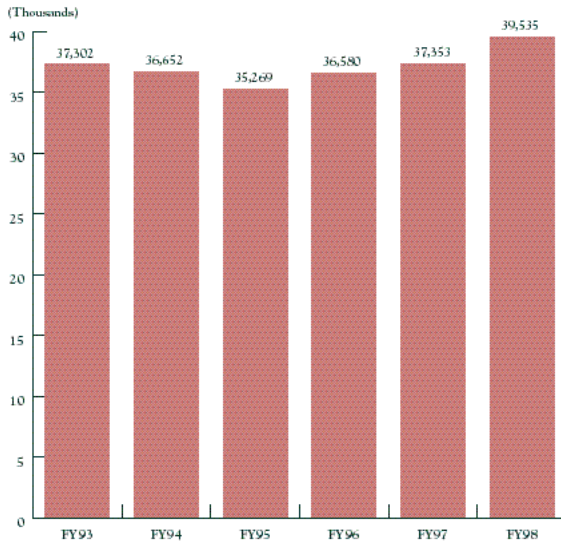


months. The agency also began checking the criminal history of current directors, owners and staff every 24 months. In the case of registered or listed family homes and residential (24-hour) facilities, this will include family members and people who live in the home or are frequently at the home while the children are in care. The agency may now deny a license, registration or listing based on the findings of these background checks.

Alternative Accreditation

In 1997, the Governor’s Faith-based Task Force recommended that an alternative to licensing be created. As a result, the Legislature created the Alternative Accreditation Program, which allows child-care facilities and child-placing agencies to operate without a license if

*Inspections of
Child Care Facilities
FY 1993–98*



they are accredited by an organization. The accreditation organization must require compliance with standards that meet or exceed state standards. PRS approves these accreditation organizations. Once a facility or agency has been “accredited,” it will be monitored by the accreditation organization. At the end of Fiscal Year 1998, the agency had received its first

application by an organization wishing to be accredited. As of the publication of this report, the application was approved.

Inspections

In Fiscal Year 1998, Licensing staff conducted 39,535 inspections to determine if facilities met minimum standards. Those failing to

meet standards may be placed on evaluation or probation status, which increases the number of inspections and level of assistance they receive. If the risk to children is substantial, the license or registration may be suspended for a period or it may be revoked. Once revoked, operators may not reapply for two years. The agency also investigates complaints and serious occurrences involving child care. There were 1,183 investigations of abuse or neglect and 11,534 investigations of alleged standards violations in Fiscal Year 1998.

Child Care Information

Parents can receive information about child care, and new providers can learn about the licensing process, by calling their local PRS office. The agency also offers a toll-free child care information hotline (1-800-862-5252) to answer questions. In Fiscal Year 1998, the hotline responded to 8,719 calls from the public.

During 1998, staff revised and distributed public outreach brochures about child-care options, which reflected changes such as listed family homes. The agency posted updated minimum standards and guidelines for day-care centers and registered family homes, listings of self-instructional programs, and other information on its web site at <http://www.tdprs.state.tx.us> under "Child Care."

Training

Licensing staff provided 850 training and professional development sessions for staff of licensed and registered facilities in 1998. Examples of topics that were offered are child-care minimum standards, recordkeeping, child health and safety, nutrition, age-appropriate activities, child guidance, and discipline.



Child Care Licensing staff are charged with enforcing the state's minimum standards for the health, safety, and well-being of children who are in out-of-home care. When a center fails to meet minimum standards, Licensing staff inform the center's director in writing; the director is responsible for bringing the center into compliance. After repeated standards violations or a single serious incident, a facility's license may be revoked or it may be placed on probation for up to one year. A day care center (above) in south El Paso was placed on six months probation. Through the effort of the facility's owner and staff, noncompliance with standards were corrected and the probation was lifted after only three months.



Student council members from Sam Houston High School in Arlington share their time with children at Alpha Childcare, a crisis child-care facility sponsored by Mission Arlington. Each child is adopted by students who bring them gifts on birthdays and holidays. “It’s important for us to give back to the community,” said one student.

Child-care licensing representatives, investigators, and their supervisors received more than 9,800 hours of training in such areas as interviewing child victims of abuse/neglect, cultural diversity, facility minimum standards, and program policy and procedure. The clerical and support staff participated in 746 hours of training that included customer service and the use of automated systems.

Day care

- ◆ Day-care centers provide care for more than 12 children under age 14 for less than 24 hours.
- ◆ Registered family homes provide care in the caregiver’s home for up to six children under age 14, in addition to the caregiver’s own children. They may also take in up to six more school-age children after school.
- ◆ Listed family homes—a new category of regulated child care effective Sept. 1, 1997—provide regular care in a caregiver’s home for one to three children who are not related to them. Unlike other facilities, listed family homes do not have minimum standards and are not inspected.
- ◆ Group day-care homes provide care for 7-12 children under age 14 for less than 24 hours a day.
- ◆ Kindergartens and nursery schools provide care to children ages 2-7 for four hours a day or less.
- ◆ Drop-in care centers provide occasional care for short time periods.
- ◆ Schools, grades kindergarten and above, provide educational programs for children ages 5-13 during the same hours as public schools.

Residential

(licensed 24-hour care)

- ◆ Foster family homes provide care for up to six children.
- ◆ Foster group homes provide care for 7-12 children.
- ◆ Emergency shelters provide short-term residential care for children and food, clothing, shelter, and medical services as needed.
- ◆ Child-placing agencies arrange for placement of children in adoption or foster care. Agencies are responsible for assuring that their foster homes meet standards.
- ◆ Institutions providing basic child care provide 24-hour care but do not offer specialized programs such as those at emergency shelters and residential treatment centers.
- ◆ Institutions serving mentally retarded children serve children or adolescents with deficits in intellectual function or adaptive behavior.
- ◆ Residential treatment centers provide care and treatment for emotionally disturbed children and adolescents in an institutional setting.
- ◆ Halfway houses serve as transitional living facilities for no more than 24 children 15 years or older. They provide therapeutic group living to help children make the transition to living in the community.
- ◆ Therapeutic camps provide special outdoor experience programs for children over age 6 with behavioral problems.
- ◆ Maternity homes provide residential care for four or more pregnant women or women who have given birth within two weeks prior to the date of admission.

Child Care Facilities in Texas End of FY 1998

	Facilities	Capacity
Day Care Licensing		
Day Care Centers	7,715	667,660
Drop-in Centers	18	771
Kindergartens/Nursery Schools	276	17,641
Schools	72	6,963
Group Day Care Homes	1,877	22,807
Total Licensed/Certified Facilities	9,958	715,842
Registered Family Homes	10,543	63,258
Listed Homes	1,163	3,489
Total Day Care Facilities	21,664	782,589
Residential Licensing		
Residential Child Care Facilities:		
Independent Foster Family Homes	65	216
Independent Foster Group Homes	38	446
Emergency Shelters	70	1,623
Institutions Providing Basic Care	79	4,874
Institutions Serving Mentally Retarded Children	8	249
Residential Treatment Centers	92	4,054
Halfway Houses	4	102
Therapeutic Camps	9	469
Total Residential Child Care Facilities	365	12,033
Child Placing Agencies (Total 191)		
Agency Foster Homes	2,489	7,883
Agency Foster Group Homes	235	2,185
Total Agency Homes	2,724	10,068
Total Residential Facilities and Agency Homes	3,089	22,101
CPS Approved Foster Homes*	3,348	10,449
CPS Approved Adoptive Homes*	2,232	1,968
Maternity Homes	14	N/A
Child Care Administrators Licensed	1,079	N/A

*CPS staff verify and assure that these homes meet standards.