



Child Care Licensing

Responsibilities

- ◆ Regulate all child-care facilities and child-placing agencies to protect the health, safety and well-being of children in care by reducing the risk of injury, abuse and communicable disease.
- ◆ Establish and monitor facilities' and agencies' compliance with minimum standards of care.
- ◆ Inform parents and the public about child care in general and minimum standards compliance histories on specific facilities or homes.
- ◆ Provide technical assistance to providers on areas covered in the minimum standards of care.

Advances

◆ In 2003, Child Care Licensing revised minimum standards for child day-care centers. The new standards were adopted following an extensive public review period from July to November 2002. More than 4,000 people, including child-care providers, parents, elected officials, business groups, professional organizations, and governmental entities submitted more than 15,000 comments to agency staff and board members. The standards consolidated six sets of rules into two sets, one for home-based care and one for center-based care. The standards were also rewritten into an easy to understand question-and-answer format designed to improve compliance and reduce mistakes. The Texas Legislature requires DFPS to periodically review, revise, and consolidate the agency's rules and regulations. The last major standards revision for center-based care was in 1995; the last major revision for home-based care was in 1990.

◆ Child Care Licensing worked with the Advancing Residential Childcare (ARC) Project (see entry in Executive Summary) to begin revising the residential child-care standards. The new standards will better address the needs of children and consolidate license types. They will be more closely aligned with CPS contract requirements and the service level structure CPS uses to assess the needs of children in its care. These revised standards will more clearly define expectations regarding the quality of care and services being received by children living in the homes and facilities.



◆ On Nov. 6, 2002, the Child Care Licensing Automated Support System (CLASS) Project received the Best of Texas award for "Excellence in Information Technology Collaboration" from the Center for Digital Government and *Government Technology* magazine. Winning projects were chosen because they showed a high degree of collaboration within or across jurisdictions and improved the transparency of service to citizens, businesses, or employees. CCL staff use the CLASS system to enter all pertinent information about regulated facilities and agencies, including monitoring, inspections, and investigations.

Responsiveness

◆ Senate Bill 74, 78th Texas Legislature, directed the Health and Human Services Commission to study and produce a comprehensive report on collaborative public/private

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The main function of the Child Care Licensing division is to regulate all Texas child-care facilities. The ongoing work of a Licensing worker is to ensure each facility assigned to them, whether new or old, meets the state's minimum standards of care, which are the

base-level health and safety guidelines that no facility should fall below.

Like all Licensing workers, Joan Stone (left) has to wear many hats in the course of a day's work. Sometimes she is inspector with a clipboard in hand, reviewing facilities against the minimum standards from front to back, inside and outside. Other times, she is a technical advisor, answering questions and helping child-care directors understand what is needed to make sure their facilities meet minimum standards. When she finds a violation of the standards, she must take on the role of diplomat, working with the facility on an appropriate timeline to get those violations corrected.

Facilities that fail to meet the standards may be placed on evaluation or probation, which increases the number of inspections and level of technical assistance they receive. If the risk to children is substantial, the agency may suspend a license for a period, or, in worst case scenarios, revoke the license.

"I worked together with Joan to address the issues she found," said the child-care director (right). "In one instance, a violation occurred after I had been desperate to get in someone on a temporary basis to help due to illness of a regular worker. I wished I had looked more into the person's background because she was not responsible enough."

Stone said that it can be very difficult for facilities to find qualified staff. "In this case, the child-care director was very open to being helped. We all had the same goals and wanted to work together to achieve them. Now that the facility has corrected what I found, it is fine. They have built themselves up to have a better compliance with the minimum standards."

initiatives targeted at enhancing the quality of child care. As a result, CCL staff and PRS Board members began preliminary work on the project with the Texas Workforce Commission, Office of Early Childhood Coordination, and Governor's office.

- ◆ In response to other legislative initiatives, CCL implemented policies that eliminated the duplication of sanitation and fire inspections conducted by local political subdivisions in day-care centers; added a search feature to the www.txchild-caresearch.org web site to look specifically for adoption agencies; changed standards to require carbon monoxide detectors in day-care homes and centers; changed standards to allow exemptions from immunization requirements if parents object; and changed standards to call for joint investigations with law enforcement within 24 hours on highest priority abuse/neglect investigations.

- ◆ As part of a statewide public awareness campaign, CCL staff distributed CD-ROMs with a multitude of useful information on child care and provider resources such as such as parenting information, training materials, posters, and sample forms to all day-care providers.

- ◆ In May, CCL staff presented the first-ever training on child abuse in the Vietnamese language to 178 Arlington region, non-English speaking Vietnamese child-care providers. The training was conducted at University of Texas at Arlington (UTA) and was a joint collaboration between CCL, UTA, and First Texas Campfire.

- ◆ In 2003, CCL revised its application policies to increase efficiency in processing new applications when a child placing agency changes locations.

- ◆ Staff worked with the Texas Department of Public Safety to create a new procedure for obtaining positive identification of criminal matches, which will save staff time and money when conducting criminal background checks on potential child-care employees.

Ongoing Initiatives

- ◆ CCL staff in the agency's Houston region participated in the "Preschool for All" project. Working with staff from the University of Texas Public Health Center and others, CCL will benefit from this project by better preparing for future training and monitoring needs. This collaborative effort will help show potential new owners of child-care facilities which sections of the greater Houston area have the highest need for child care.

What CCL Does

Child Care Licensing is responsible for protecting the health, safety, and well-being of Texas children who attend or reside in regulated child-care facilities. These facilities include day-care centers, family day homes, residential care facilities, emergency shelters, child-placing agencies, foster homes, adoptive homes, and maternity homes. CCL also licenses child-care administrators.

Inspections

CCL staff conduct inspections and investigation of child-care operations to monitor compliance with minimum standards, the base-level health and safety requirements that no facility should fall below. Facilities failing to meet minimum standards may be placed on evaluation or probation, which increases the number of inspections and the level of technical assistance they receive. If the risk to children is substantial, the provider's license or registration may be suspended for a period, or it may be revoked. Once a license is revoked, the license-holder may not reapply for two years.

Day-Care Licensing

Day-care providers care for children for less than a full day.

- ◆ Child-care centers provide care for 13 or more children who are younger than age 14.
- ◆ Registered child-care homes provide care in the caregiver's home for up to six children who are younger than age 14. They may also care for up to six more school-age children after school. The total number may not exceed 12, including the caregiver's own children.
- ◆ Licensed child-care homes provide care in the caregiver's home for seven to 12 children who are younger than age 14, including the caregiver's own children.
- ◆ Listed family homes 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.

Residential Licensing

Residential child-care facilities care for children 24 hours a day.

- ◆ Foster family homes provide care for up to six children.
- ◆ Foster group homes provide care for seven to 12 children.



Due to the implementation of newly revised minimum standards for child care, the summer of 2003 was a time of transition for child-care providers across the state. In order to help with the training process for the new standards, Child Care Licensing specialist Mary Anne Beauregard of Longview (right) wrote a comprehensive, 21-hour, self-study training module and made it available on computer disk to any child-care director who requested it. The module was designed in such a way that a director could assign portions of the standards to caregivers working at the center, helping the worker become familiar with the new standards as well.

"The new standards have so many changes that just reading them isn't enough to have a working knowledge of them," said Beauregard. "The self-study module helped directors to train their caregivers in the new standards to ensure compliance and reduce risk to children in care."

Jasmine Williams (left), Director of Agape Learning Academy of Longview, thought the training module was excellent and made her job a little easier. "It was and will continue to be very beneficial to the Agape caregivers, especially to the ones who have never worked in child care before, to improve the quality of our care to children."

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During the Summer of 2003, Child Care Licensing staff trained about 13,000 child-care providers across the state about the newly revised minimum standards for child care. The new standards were rewritten into an easy-to-understand question-and-answer format designed to improve compliance and reduce mistakes. The standards also consolidated six sets of rules into two sets, one for home-based care and one for center-based care.

In order to enhance the training process about the new standards, Tiffany Bezdek of Child Care Licensing in Austin (above) did a takeoff of the game show, "Jeopardy." The use of games, color, stories, visuals, and props all help trainee's retain information and improve the transfer of information to the workplace.

The agency, which is required by the Texas Legislature to periodically review and revise the standards, adopted them following an extensive public review period from July to November 2002. More than 4,000 people, including child-care providers, parents, elected officials, business groups, professional organizations, and governmental entities, submitted more than 15,000 comments to agency staff and board members.

- ◆ Emergency shelters provide short-term residential care, including any necessary medical care, for more than 12 children.
- ◆ Residential treatment centers provide care and treatment for more than 12 children and adolescents who have therapeutic needs.
- ◆ Basic child-care institutions 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 care for children or adolescents with deficits in intellectual function or adaptive behavior.
- ◆ Halfway houses serve as transitional living facilities for no more than 24 children who are 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 older than age 6 with behavioral problems.

Residential Licensing also regulates the following:

- ◆ Child-placing agencies, which arrange for placement of children in adoptive or foster care. Agencies are responsible for assuring that their foster homes meet minimum standards.
- ◆ 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 administrators who supervise and exercise direct administrative control over a 24-hour child-care institution.

Training

Regional CCL representatives, investigators, supervisors, directors, and clerical staff received more than 9,400 hours of training and professional development on topics related to their work such as child development, using automation support, regulation and inspection of facilities, and health and safety.

CCL staff, provided more than 730 training events for more than 18,000 child-care providers and caregivers. The topics included minimum standards, health and safety, infant and toddler needs, guidance, discipline, staff/child ratios, and child development. The training was provided through conferences, licensing meetings and orientations, and technical assistance to centers.