

FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME HANDBOOK



October 2010

State of North Carolina
Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Child Development

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NORTH CAROLINA DIVISION OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Mission: The social and economic future of NC depends upon the success of our children. To that end, we implement quality standards, increase access for families, and collaborate to promote enhanced service delivery of care and education across the state.

Goal: Quality for Children, Success for Life!

History

In 1971, North Carolina's first child day care licensing law was passed. As a result, the North Carolina Department of Administration, Office of Child Day Care Licensing was created.

In 1985, the North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation that consolidated the Office of Child Day Care Licensing and the NC Department of Human Resources, Office of Child Day Care Services. This consolidation led to the creation of the Child Day Care Section, which was housed in the NC Division of Facility Services under the NC Department of Human Resources.

In 1993, the Child Day Care Section and some other parts of the Department of Human Resources (now referred to as the Department of Health and Human Services) agencies were reorganized into the Division of Child Development. The creation of the Division reflected the growing importance of child care to North Carolina families. North Carolina boasts one of the highest rates of working mothers with young children in the nation, making the availability of child care essential for the State's economic development and stability.

With so many children in care, the mission of the Division is clear. We must work to improve the quality of child care that is provided for children in our state, and we must ensure that quality child care is not only available, but that it is also accessible and affordable to all children and families who need it.

But this must be a joint effort if we are to be successful. For it is only with the help of the child care providers who spend their time loving, teaching, and caring for these children on a daily basis that this goal can be accomplished. Think of the impact the child care provider has. Some children will spend eight or more hours a day for an entire 12 years with child care providers. Surely, we must make certain that this association of children and caregivers is one that enriches each and every child. Children are the future, and for everyone who cares for children, for everyone who cares what the future will be, the state of child care should be also of the utmost concern. Together, we can secure the future by seeing to it that the children are well cared for today.

In 1999, the North Carolina General Assembly enacted legislation creating NC's Star Rated License System. The Star Rated License System represents enhanced voluntary program standards that reflect higher quality child care and exceeds the state's minimum licensing requirements. The star rated license system is aligned with the state's licensing system and is inclusive of all eligible child care facilities. Child care programs that meet the minimum licensing requirements and choose not to be assessed for higher voluntary standards are issued a One Star License. Child care programs that voluntarily meet higher standards may earn Two to Five Stars, depending on the standards they meet. Originally, the star rated license system evaluated child care programs on three components: program standards, education standards, and compliance history with child care requirements. In 2005 legislation was enacted that revised the star rated license program so that only two components are used to determine the number of stars earned: program standards and education standards. Research shows that program standards and education standards most accurately determine or reflect quality in child care settings and are directly linked to improved quality of care and good outcomes for children. The system was created for many reasons. It allows child care programs to be recognized for the higher quality care that already exists, improves consumer awareness of quality, and focuses on continuous quality improvement.

The Organization

The Division is the result of a longstanding commitment by the state of North Carolina to protect and serve its young children. The mission of the Division is performed by various organizational units that work together, each sharing in the overall responsibility of the agency. The responsibilities for these units are provided below:

Director's Office

The Director's Office is responsible for managing all personnel within the division; reviewing research on early childhood development issues; responding to requests from the public; preparing and presenting information and data about activities within the agency; and acting as a conduit between the Division's units to ensure the effective coordination of services. The Director's office focus is on our customers: our employees, children, parents, providers, and our partners in delivering services to the public. The following offices are under the Director's Office umbrella:

North Carolina Interagency Coordinating Council

- Assures the coordination and availability of comprehensive services for children with special needs and their families at the state level

- Provides leadership to local interagency coordinating councils that design and coordinate services for children with disabilities in each of the state's 100 counties

Licensing Enforcement Section

- Oversees the administrative actions taken by the Division
- Works in collaboration with the Division's attorney on hearings regarding administrative actions and negotiation of settlement agreements

Regulatory Services Section

The Regulatory Services Section monitors and licenses all child care programs in North Carolina. Key responsibilities include:

- Assuring a safe and healthy child care environment in licensed Child Care Centers and Homes
- Promoting the overall availability of child care
- Increasing the availability of child care that meets higher than minimum licensing standards
- Increasing the amount of information provided to the public regarding child care arrangements and children's needs
- Monitoring child care arrangements for compliance with requirements
- Investigating complaints about child care arrangements, including reports of child abuse or neglect, and taking appropriate action
- Investigating reports of illegal operations
- Issuing licenses and other operating permits to child care arrangements
- Providing technical assistance and training to child care providers, potential providers and local agencies
- Providing consumer education and increasing parent outreach efforts by making information about North Carolina child care providers available on the Internet through the Division's Facility Search Site

Child Care Subsidy Services Section

The Subsidy Services Section increases access to child care for low income families in North Carolina by administering the Subsidized Child Care Program which includes

the development and issuance of policy to local purchasing agencies. Key responsibilities include:

- Approving Child Care Centers and Family Child Care Homes for participation in the subsidized child care program
- Reimbursing county departments of social services and other local purchasing agencies for monthly expenditures for subsidized child care

Administration Section

The Administration Section supports the rest of the Division by helping with implementation of programs and policies. Key responsibilities include:

- Preparing and managing the budget
- Purchasing equipment and supplies
- Developing and monitoring contracts and financial reports
- Designing and support of information systems to support policy and programmatic functions
- Producing reports that show child care trends and figures in the state
- Maintaining all automated office support systems
- Providing project management support to Division initiatives
- Developing administrative procedures that support the safe and smooth functioning of the Division

Child Care Workforce Standards Section

The Workforce Section promotes the professional development of child care providers across North Carolina. The section verifies child care provider credentials and educational assessments and approves training opportunities to assist in meeting staff requirements. Key responsibilities include:

- Developing and maintaining credential requirements for the North Carolina Early Childhood Credential/Family Child Care Credential Program(s) and assessing additional post secondary coursework
- Administering the criminal record check process to determine which providers are qualified to care for children

- Funding the Teacher Education and Compensation Helps (T.E.A.C.H.), Early Childhood Project, which is a statewide scholarship program to study early childhood education at all 58 community colleges and some of the state universities
- Improving safety and well-being of children in child care centers and family child care homes through in-service training
- Increasing the amount of information provided to the public related to child care quality and the needs of young children through child care resource and referral services

Our Accomplishments

- 2004 finalist for Innovations in American Government Award, a program of the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government
- Selected by Working Mother magazine in November 2000 as one of the top six states for child care
- Spotlighted as innovative state by the Southern Institute on Children and Families for innovative subsidy policy
- In 1999, received Innovation in Government Award from the Council of State Governments for Smart Start
- In 1999, the Division implemented a new five-level star rated license for child care facilities based on achieving higher voluntary levels of program standards, staff education, and compliance history
- In 2005, the Division revised the star rated license system based on achieving higher voluntary levels of program standards and staff education
- Expanded Smart Start from 12 pilot partnerships in 1993 to 83 partnerships in all 100 counties
- Frequent advisor to other states on child care licensing and subsidy policies and systems

How to Use This Handbook

The first thing to do upon receiving this handbook is **to read the Table of Contents**. In the Table of Contents you will find a wealth of information that can make established family child care home arrangements better and can help new programs get started. The Table of Contents provides the reader with a list of the contents of the chapters as well as the resources that can be found throughout the handbook.

This handbook is divided into topical sections. Each chapter deals with a specific topic area and all information regarding child care requirements and resources for the topic are contained in either the chapter or its individual resource section. For example, in Chapter 3 – Health you will be able to find information about administering medication, when to exclude children, medical forms required, meal planning, and diapering.

Some chapters begin with any definitions needed to understand the topics covered in that chapter. Definitions will always be contained within a gray shaded box. Each chapter is divided into sections of like information. These are indicated by bold topic headers centered on the page. Following each section header will be “rule boxes”. A “rule box” contains the actual rules related to the section topic. Each individual rule within the box is identified by a red “star circle” . Once the rules have been identified, additional information and explanations will follow in a list to the right side of the page preceded by “check boxes” . All information needed to understand and be in compliance with the rule will be listed next to the check box. Additional resources and sample forms have been added to some sections.

You may find one or more of the following symbols listed under the rule box:

- A computer symbol  indicates a web site is provided as a resource, which will provide useful information related to that section of the handbook.
- A folder symbol  indicates that sample forms or informational handouts are available at the end of the chapter in the resource section or can be found in another section of the handbook.
- Space is available on the left hand side of the page to make any notes you may have regarding the rule or its explanations. You are encouraged to use this area as you read through the handbook to record additional information you receive from staff with the Division or questions you wish to ask at a later time.

- The letters **HH** represent helpful hints. Helpful hints are provided throughout each chapter to point out best practices in early care and education practices. Some helpful hints provide ideas to consider improving the quality of your program or provide hints on how to achieve and maintain compliance with child care requirements. A helpful hint is not a child care requirement. Helpful hints have been added to give child care providers additional information so the job might be a little easier, or simply to share a good idea.
- A telephone symbol  indicates the contact information for a local, state or national organization that offers assistance and information to child care providers. You may want to include this information in the Local Resource section of the FCCH Handbook.
- A star symbol ★ indicates enhanced voluntary standards are available and to refer to *Chapter 6 – Star-Rated License* for more information on these standards.

Throughout the handbook, when you see the abbreviation FCCH, this means family child care home. The Division hopes that you find the format of this handbook useful and informative. If at any time, you have questions about the use of the handbook, please contact the Division of Child Development at 1-800-859-0829 or your child care licensing consultant.

Introduction

Have you been thinking about starting a new business and thought a family child care home (FCCH) is the business you would like to start? There are many things to consider when starting a business, especially one that is run out of your home. Ask yourself the following questions to see if child care could be the right business for you:

1. Will your family be supportive of your new profession?
2. If you have young children, will they be able to share you and their home?
3. Do you, or any members of your household, have a criminal record or history of child abuse/neglect?
4. Is your home in a location where you will be able to enroll enough children to succeed in your FCCH business?
5. Are you financially able to maintain your business during the time you are just starting and may not yet have enrolled the number of children you want?
6. If you rent your home, is your landlord willing for you to provide child care for multiple children?
7. Are you in good health? Do you have lots of energy?
8. Does your neighborhood or home town have restrictions on home businesses?
9. Are you 21 years old and have a high school diploma or GED?

If you answered “no” or “maybe” to any of these questions you may want to reconsider your decision. This might not be the right time to begin a child care business.

If starting a FCCH is the right decision for you and your family at this time, then this handbook will be a great resource for you. The handbook will walk you through what you need to do to receive a license to open a FCCH and how to maintain that license.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	
North Carolina Division of Child Development	i
How to Use this Handbook	vi
Introduction	viii
Chapter 1: GETTING STARTED	
TOPIC	PAGE
• Definition Of A Family Child Care Home	1.1
• Provider Requirements	1.2
• Criminal Record Checks For Family Child Care Home Operators	1.3
• Health Requirements For FCCH Operators	1.6
• Health And Safety Training Requirements	1.7
• In-Service Training	1.10
• Household Member Requirements	1.12
• Additional Caregiver Requirements	1.15
• Building Code And Other Household Requirements	1.18
• Steps To Get Started	1.24
Resources Available for Chapter 1: Guidelines to High School Diplomas and Equivalents NC Early Care and Education Professional Certification Scale NC School Age Professional Certification Scale Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) – Course In-Service Training FAQs Application for Employment Family Child Care Home Operator Checklist Equipment and Material Suggestions for Infants – School-Age Child Care Provider Resources Health and Safety Resources for Child Care Be Lead Safe	
Chapter 2: SAFETY	
TOPIC	PAGE
• General Safety Requirements	2.1
• Supervision	2.15
• Outdoor Play Area	2.16
• Transportation	2.21
• Animals	2.26
• Swimming Pools	2.27
• Location Of Your Family Child Care Home	2.29

Resources Available for Chapter 2:

Hazardous Items Storage
Child Care Environment: Room-by-Room Safety Checklist
Choking Prevention, AAP
Stocking a First Aid Kit
Five Questions for Kid Safe Pest Control in Child Care
Infant/Toddler Safe Sleep Policy Sample (Revised)
US CPSC Home Playground Safety Checklist
Playground Safety Resources
Fieldtrip and Transportation Safety Checklist
Requirements and Recommendations for the Transportation of Children by
Schools, Child Care Centers and Other Organizations in North Carolina
Rules Governing Swimming Pools
Inspection of Swimming Pool
Pool Safety

Chapter 3: HEALTH

TOPIC	PAGE
• Health Records	3.1
• Infectious And Contagious Diseases	3.7
• Medication	3.10
• Nutrition	3.18
• Food Service	3.24
• Diapering/Toileting	3.25
• Sleep	3.28
• Outdoor Play	3.31
• Indoor Air Quality	3.34
• Screen Time	3.35

Resources Available for Chapter 3:

Food Allergy, Asthma, Diabetes, and Seizure Action Plans
Brand Names for Required Vaccines
Children in Child Care: What Shots Do They Need?
Medication Error Report
Communicable Diseases and Exclusion from Child Care
Daily Child Care Health Check
Maintaining a Sanitary Child Care Environment
Cleaning Up Body Fluids
Situations That Require Immediate Medical Attention
American's With Disabilities Act
Checklist for Administering Medication
Meal Patterns for Children in Child Care Programs
Menu Planning Form
Best Practices for Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Screen Media in Child Care Settings
Why Child Care Matters for Obesity Prevention
Child Care Sheet: How to Handle Pumped Milk
10 Ways Child Care Programs Can Support Breastfeeding
Child Care Weather Watch
Air Quality Index Guide
Getting Started: Ten Ideas to Enrich Your Outdoor Learning Environment Today
What the Research Shows: A Summary Research-Based Indicators Of The Nature Deficit

What's In It For Me? What Teachers/Caregivers can expect to gain from "taking on" the OUTDOORS...

Chapter 4: RECORDS AND ACTIVITIES

TOPIC	PAGE
• General Record Keeping	4.1
• Activity Schedule	4.4

Resources for Chapter 4:

School-Age Resources
 Helpful Websites for School-Age Care
 Homework Policy
 Guide to Planning Developmentally Appropriate Activities
 Activity Planning Forms – *Not Required*
 Information on CSEFEL

Children's File Checklist
 Program Records Checklist
 Operator File Checklist
 Additional Caregiver File Checklist

Chapter 5: BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

TOPIC	PAGE
• Discipline Requirements	5.2
• Behavior Management Strategies	5.5

Resources Available for Chapter 5:

Social and Emotional Health: State Resources

Chapter 6: STAR-RATED LICENSE

TOPIC	PAGE
• Application For A Star Rated License	6.2
• Program Standards	6.4
• Education Standards	6.9
• Quality Point Options	6.11
• Maintaining A Star Rating	6.12
• Requesting An Appeal Or Change In Rating	6.13

Resources Available for Chapter 6:

Star Rated License Frequently Asked Questions
 Rated License for Family Child Care Homes
 Operational Policies for Family Child Care Homes
 A Quick Reference to the Rated License Assessment Project
 Scheduling Your Rated License Assessment
 Information for Child Care Providers about the NCRLAP Grievance Process
 Environmental Rating Scale Improvement Plan
 Sample Professional Development Plan
 North Carolina Approved Early Childhood Curricula
 Rated License Reassessment Self-Study

Chapter 7: LICENSES

TOPIC	PAGE
• Types of Licenses	7.2
• Status Changes	7.5
• Compliance History	7.7

Chapter 8: COMPLIANCE MONITORING

TOPIC	PAGE
• Authority To Inspect Child Care Programs	8.1
• Types of Visits	8.2
• Parent Monitoring	8.7

Resources Available for Chapter 8:
Investigations Of Child Abuse/Neglect Allegations In Child Care Facilities
Summary of the Law

Chapter 9: ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS

TOPIC	PAGE
• Causes Of An Administrative Action	9.1
• Administrative Actions	9.2
• Denial Of A License	9.11
• Civil Penalties	9.11
• Administrative Action Procedures	9.13
• Contested Cases	9.15

Resources Available for Chapter 9:
Procedure For Appeal

Chapter 10: RULEMAKING PROCEDURES

TOPIC	PAGE
• North Carolina Child Care Commission	10.1
• Petitions For Rulemaking	10.3
• Rulemaking Procedures	10.4
• Declaratory Rulings	10.5

Resources Available for Chapter 10:
Permanent Rule Making Process

APPENDICES

A. NC General Statutes

B. NC Child Care Requirements

C. Inclusion Resources

- Early Childhood Inclusion: A Joint Position Statement of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
- Questions and Answers about the Americans with Disabilities Act: A Quick Reference for Child Care Providers
- Helpful Web Sites on Inclusion Topics
- Supporting Families of Children with Disabilities in Inclusive Programs
- The Benefits of an Inclusive Education: Making It Work

D. Emergency Preparedness Resources

- Emergency Preparedness and Response for Child Care
- Security Awareness Tips for Child Care Providers
- Child Care and Preschool Pandemic influenza Planning Checklist
- Emergency Preparedness Tips for Child Care Providers
- Emergency Plan Template
- After the Emergency is Over: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in Children and Youth