

Pinellas County License Board for Children's Centers & Family Day Care Homes

Our mission is to protect and promote the health, safety, and mental development of children cared for in children's centers and family child care homes in Pinellas County

Patsy Buker, Executive Director
Elise Minkoff, Chairman



2012 Greetings to Family Child Care Home Providers!

THOUGHTS & REFLECTIONS on 2011

I have always enjoyed the end of one year and the beginning of another. It gives me an opportunity to reflect on the challenges and accomplishments of the past year. As I look back on 2011, I am first of all very thankful. I have my health, my family and not just a job, but a very inspiring one! My job allows me the privilege of working with a great staff at the Child Care Licensing Program, and I am thankful that they are still patiently teaching me more and more as time goes by. My questions are probably evolving from the more basic aspects of licensing regulations to more conceptual and philosophical aspects as time passes...

It has also been my good fortune to meet many of the licensed child care providers and to learn from the pros. I have not only increased my knowledge base, but I have enjoyed listening and getting to know many of you. I clearly recognized the importance of mending fences and building trust and mutual understanding when I first accepted this job in September of 2010. That was the challenge, but in actuality I derive a tremendous amount of pleasure from building partnerships! I became convinced early in my career that the power of the group far exceeds that power of the individual. When you can identify common ground and shared goals, you can do more for the common good. In this situation, it was so clear that we could and should work together towards the goal of providing excellent care for children. I rejoice when I think about some of the struggles and eventual meeting of the minds from this year. We still have miles to go, but I truly believe that we have cleared the roadway significantly.

An additional area that has been important this year is the partnering and communication between CCLP and other organizations in the community. This has been another exciting part of 2011, and it will continue indefinitely. I appreciate all of the support and ideas that I have received in 2011.

Patsy Buker

Please take note of the following updates and reminders.

CAPACITY INCREASES FOR HOMES

The new increase in capacity for Family Child Care Homes is in full swing! Many providers have applied for the new capacities. ***Actually, over 200 of you have requested and been granted the new capacities!***

There has been some confusion in the communities about the “Who, What, When and Where” of the higher capacity. The language in the regulations was officially changed on July 1, 2011. This, however, does not mean you are automatically granted the new capacities. You need to request an increase through the application on the PCLB website: **www.pclb.org**. The application is in the yellow box on the home page. You can also call us and ask for an application or for assistance in finding it on the website.

Some providers assumed that they were automatically given the larger capacity on July 1 or at their renewal because they saw the extra wording. Please remember that it is not an automatic increase. You need to apply so that we can come out and ensure that you have enough sleep spaces, toys and the like.

If you are ever confused on your home’s capacity, the first thing you should do is read your license. It will tell you if you are still at the capacity of 5, or if you have been granted a license to care for up to 8 child care children. We also continue to have some providers who choose to have a maximum for 4 or even 3 children and we will continue to honor those requests. It is your individual decision as to how many children that you would like to care for, as long as it is covered in the regulations and it fits your situation. You are always welcome to call our office at any time to talk to one of us specifically about your home and your wishes.

FEES

There is a \$25 application fee for the new capacity increase. However, if you are requesting an increase at your regular renewal time it is free, but we still need the application and an Addendum to the Plan of Operation that reflects how you will manage additional children in your care for your file. If you are confused as to whether you need to pay the fee or not, please call your Specialist.

LICENSES

If you have renewed your license you probably noticed a change in the appearance of the licenses. They are definitely prettier! They are also much more professional. This is your profession. You work hard for your license, and we wanted that effort and professionalism reflected in the actual license. You will also notice that they have more information on them. This is because the definition of the Family Child Care Homes changed on July 1, 2011, to show the maximum number of children you can have in your home at any given time, and the age restrictions.

HELPFUL TOOLS

So, now you are probably wondering exactly who you can care for with the maximum of 8 children license. This is an important thing to know, as some providers have chosen to stay at their current levels because it just works better for them. As many of you have seen, the Child Care Licensing Program has created some forms to help explain the exactly who you can care for with the new capacities allowed in Family Child Care Homes.

The most used form has been the Capacity Chart. Our Specialists have been bringing them to your homes, and it is on our website in the bright yellow box. We have also brought them to provider association meetings and have received great feedback from the providers on how they could be easier to use and understand. With your help, we have also created a new tool called the Capacity Worksheet. This is also on our website and Specialists are bringing them out to your homes. If you don't have one, ask while they are in your home. They are more than happy to go over them with you so that everyone can stay in compliance and keep the children safe and happy.

CAPACITY WORKSHEETS

The easiest way to use the Capacity Worksheet is to take a moment (hopefully a quiet one, ha ha!) and sit down with a blank copy and start to fill it in. The first thing is to read the definition in the box at the top of the page. Beneath the definition, there are colored boxes with ages written inside of them. Each colored block represents a child that you can care for in your home. (Again, you need to have the maximum capacity on your license to care for these children.) Each color is for an age group. Then go step by step below:

- The line to the right of the multi-colored box is for a child's name. You should write the name and age of the youngest child you are caring for on that line.
- Continue down the sheet and when you are out of lines, you cannot provide child care for another child and you cannot have another household member child home.

It may take a time or two to get the hang of filling them out, so keep practicing. Feel free to call us and we can walk you through your first time on the phone, or help you when we are in your home. Once you get the hang of it, it becomes much easier to always know if you are in compliance or not. We all hate non-compliances, especially if they come with fines, so please use us for help!!!

REMINDER ABOUT ADVERTISING

Florida Statute 402.318 outlines the requirement of including license numbers when advertising child care services and we want to provide you with a reminder.

We have noticed many signs on the streets and on front porches that do not have the license number on them. We are also looking at ads on Craig's list and following up with those that do not have license numbers. We believe that holding a license to provide care is very important in assuring that children receive quality care. We salute each of you who have received a license and who continue to be in compliance with regulations. Please contact us if you have questions about advertising or if you see an ad that you believe is for a non-licensed provider.

BEYOND CRIBS AND RATTLES

The Child Care License Program has been receiving a lot of calls about the need for Beyond Cribs and Rattles training classes. This class is no longer required. However, it is a FANTASTIC class and we cannot stress enough how valuable it is for providers! It is full of great tips, fun games, and ways to say "no" that children of all ages will understand and not just hear, "no, no, no." If you have not taken this class, please consider taking it for your annual in-service training hours.

CHILD CARE LICENSING PROGRAM IS MOVING

We will be moving to a brand new building on Ulmerton Road in Largo at the end of January. All of the Environmental Health and Preparedness programs will occupy the second floor of a new Full Service Public Health Center. The first floor will house dental and medical services, WIC, Vital Statistics, Legal, and some Healthy Families services. We are excited about the move and we will invite you to visit with us after we are settled. We will have a new address and phone extensions and we will send out a special post card to give you all of the details as we get closer to the move.

NEW STAFF MEMBERS

We have the good fortune to introduce you to Rose Reichert who is our new Senior Clerk for Centers. She is a wonderful addition and a fast learner, but still very new so please be patient. Rose replaces Bridgett who transferred to another position in St. Pete. We also have added another very valuable person to our group. Rachael Griffith has become our Senior Clerk for Homes as Bunny Pelletier recently left us. You may have met Rachael in her former capacity of Fingerprint Clerk in our office. We are very pleased to have her working even more closely with us now.

DCF BROCHURES ON REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

DCF has an excellent brochure available for distribution to staff and parents that clearly defines the purpose of the Abuse Hotline, and the importance of reporting suspected child abuse or neglect. We are enclosing a copy and additional copies can be accessed via their website, www.myflorida.com/childcare under the Form and Brochure section.

HOPES & GOALS for 2012

The year 2012 will no doubt bring us new challenges. We have been spared budget cuts for the last few years, and we are thankful simply to go into 2012 with our contracts in place.

As promised, we will be looking at our regulations this year and we will be making recommendations to the Board to make some changes and to make some wording clearer. We do not at this time anticipate making any recommendations to the Board to increase current regulations.

We will look for more opportunities to invite provider input on subjects of interest in a less formal discussion basis as this has been helpful last year. Put this one under the heading of working together for the common good!

We will also look for new opportunities to provide assistance and technical assistance to our providers. We are looking for opportunities to partner with provider groups and assist in making training available and affordable.

Thank you again for working with us this year and for all of your efforts to be in compliance with the regulations and your loving care of the children.

Jorie Massarsky

Kathy Krause

Patsy Buker