

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



Greetings to Children's Centers 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.

COMPLIANCE WITH RATIOS FOR VPK CLASSROOMS

If you are a VPK provider, you are aware that there are different adult-child ratio requirements in those classrooms than in your other classrooms. We will continue to monitor 4 year old children's classroom to be at a 1 adult to 20 children ratio for compliance with Licensing standards. However, we have been asked to notify the Early Learning Coalition if we observe a VPK classroom that is not meeting their required ratios. It is important that you inform your Licensing Specialist if they are conducting their inspection when VPK is not in session (during wrap-around hours). Otherwise, under the Specialist comments they will note that they observed that ELC required adult-child ratios for VPK were not being met, and that the Early Learning Coalition would be notified.

LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT CHECKS IN PINELLAS COUNTY

Some of you may have received a memo in the mail from the Department of Children and Families regarding the requirement for conducting local criminal background checks. Apparently this information has caused some confusion with some providers. DCF has indicated that in the counties that they monitor, the local law enforcement check results are no longer required prior to employment or at the 5 year rescreen. However, it also clearly stated in that memo that this was not necessarily the case in any of the locally monitored counties. In Pinellas County, local law enforcement background screening results are still required to be in the personnel file for all new employees and on or before the 5 year rescreen date for current employees. The employment date must be on or after the date of the local law enforcement background screening results, or a violation will be cited. We believe that the local check is important and we do not want any providers to be out of compliance on this due to confusion from reading the DCF memo.

FOOD SERVICE INSPECTIONS

Every children's center monitored by the CCLP must have food service inspections, throughout the year, unless they have signed a non-food agreement. There are a variety of levels of food service, from serving pre-packaged snacks, to full breakfast and lunch service.

If you are selling a children's center, the new owners must submit plans and receive approval before the change of ownership can be completed. If you are unsure of the level of food service that you provide, and what types of service meets each definition, please feel free to contact our office. We will be happy to help you to understand the requirements.

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.

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE BROCHURES

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.

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 the program. 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.

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 with the bottom lines in our contracts staying constant, and we are thankful to go into 2012 with all of 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!

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

