

# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (Child Care) IN A NUTSHELL\*

- ◆ In Collier County, the Department of Children and Families is the licensing and regulation authority for the child care programs.
- ◆ The laws governing the facilities can be found in chapter 402 of the Florida Statutes and rule 65C-22 of the Florida Administrative Code.

## WHAT DOES LICENSING DO FOR ME?

- ◆ The state laws give government the authority to protect children as vulnerable and dependent citizens and to protect families as consumers of child care service.
- ◆ As a parent exploring a suitable child care program for your child, you need to be aware of the **license** status of the child care program, and what benefits licensure may provide you. Not every program is licensed or regulated in the same ways, so you need to be aware of the difference.

## STATE LICENSED EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS

- ☉ The state regulated programs are generally inspected four times a year or more by a day care licensing counselor and also an environmental health inspector from the local public health unit.
- ☉ Inspections are unannounced and conducted at various hours. Observed violations are given a corrective action date. Enforcement measures are taken for non-compliance.
- ☉ If they are properly licensed, the center will have a Department of Children and Families' license located in the facility and they must advertise with their license number.

## WHICH PROGRAMS ARE NOT LICENSED?

### ◆ **School Programs**

- ⇒ Pre-Kindergarten and afterschool programs (only for ages 3 and up) which are staffed and operated by the public or private school in which they are located are not licensed or regulated by the state and **are** the responsibility of the **school**.
- ⇒ School programs with children under 3 years must be licensed.

### ◆ **Religiously Exempt Child Care Programs**

- ⇒ Some church programs choose to be licensed and others may claim this exemption. To obtain exemption, these programs must be an integral part of a church or parochial school and be affiliated with a recognized accrediting agency.
- ⇒ A list of religious exemption accrediting organizations and contacts are on page 7.

### ◆ **Boy's Clubs, Girls Clubs and Other Recreational Programs**

- ⇒ These are not licensed or regulated at all because they do not provide child care.
- ⇒ The staff may not be screened nor are there any inspections.

### ◆ **Summer Day Camps**

- ⇒ These are not inspected or regulated
- ⇒ Staff background screening is limited

## WHAT DO I LOOK FOR? ... WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

When you do go into a day care center, you should see a license (either blue or pink) posted up in a conspicuous location. The license will specify the name and address of the facility, the permitted capacity, age range and hours of operation. (If any of this information conflicts with what you observe, you should notify the Department of Children and Families or Naples Alliance for Children immediately.)

- ◆ A **blue license** is a regular annual license.
- ◆ A **pink license** is a provisional license, which signifies that some element of licensing process has not been completed. The reasons for the provisional status will be printed on the license.
- ◆ If there is **no license**, you should inquire under what authority they are operating and with whom they are affiliated.

There are many standards, which a licensed child care facility must meet to provide a health, safe and risk free environment for your child. Although the standards are too numerous to mention, here are a few basic things each parent should be able to easily observe:

- ◆ **Cleanliness**
- ◆ **A safe physical environment both inside and out**
- ◆ **Good health practices**
- ◆ **Good supervision and adequate staff**
- ◆ **Good communication with Parents**
- ◆ **Adequate toys and activities.**

### IMPORTANT TO KNOW

- ◆ **Day Care Files are “Public Record.”** You are not only welcome, but encouraged to come review the licensing files for the inspections, complaints or administrative actions of the licensed facilities that concern you
- ◆ **All Child Care Programs should be Smoke-Free**
- ◆ **Programs and Educational content is not a focus of regulation.** As a parent you must observe and evaluate the appropriateness and stimulation the program affords your child. Look for Quality care.
- ◆ **Problems, questions or concerns?**
  - ⇒ **Contact the DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES Day Care Licensing Unit at 338-1341 or 643-9973 and <http://www.myflorida.com/childcare>**
  - ⇒ **Call Child Care of Southwest Florida at 643-3908**
  - ⇒ **Call Naples Alliance for Children at 649-5260**

\*Information in this section provided by Florida Department of Children and Families, District Eight Day Care Licensing Unity