



## IS MY HOME SUITABLE TO BE A FAMILY CHILD CARE LEARNING HOME?

An **Explore-FCC\*** Practical Help Bulletin

If you are exploring the idea of starting a Family Child Care Learning Home (FCCLH), this bulletin provides an overview of some key requirements you should consider.

### What is included in this bulletin?

- ❖ **Bright from the Start: Department of Early Care and Education (DECAL) licensing physical facility requirements. These are the most important ones; you will eventually need to read all the requirements.**
- ❖ **Zoning requirements which permit or prohibit you to open a FCCLH or place conditions on opening a FCCLH in your district.**
- ❖ **A Statement about Fire Marshall Requirements.**
- ❖ **A reminder that you need landlord permission of you rent or lease you home.**
- ❖ **A reminder that you need Homeowner Association (HOA) approval if you live in a community with a homeowner's association.**

Once DECAL licensing and specific local government requirements are satisfied, FCCLH services can be provided in a variety of residential dwellings. These include single family homes, duplex structures, and apartments.

### DECAL Licensing Requirements.

*Note: This bulletin does not render legal or other professional advice concerning the child care licensing law or process. If you need this advice, please contact DECAL.*

DECAL Licensing Requirements ensure the health, safety, and quality of the program you offer children. They are detailed and you should address the items below before you obtain your license. Here are some of the most important physical facility requirements:

#### **INSIDE THE HOME**

- Smoke Detector on each floor
- Free of fire hazards
- Has city water and sewer or well /septic system can be approved.
- 35 square feet of usable space per child
- Basement areas that are more than 25 feet from a window will not be used for child care
- Windows /doors used for ventilation must be screened
- Children shall not have access to hanging cords or other hazardous objects.

- All indoor and outdoor furniture shall be secured if by weight or mass, it could cause injury from tipping or falling.
- Clear glass doors must be marked.
- Firearms are inaccessible to children
- Furniture or equipment must not block fire exits
- When in use, radiators etc. must have a barrier or screen to prevent children from being burned
- To meet licensing child supervision requirements, you must, at all times, be on the same floor as the children. Since you may not have a home set up in a way where the kitchen or bathroom is on the same floor as the child care area, you are required to have a supervision plan in place to show how you will handle bathroom time and preparation of food. This could be utilizing a helper or taking everyone with you.

### **OUTSIDE AREA**

- A designated outdoor play area is required.
- Outside play areas must be protected from traffic or other hazards by fencing or other barriers at least four feet in height (See also zoning section).
- Resilient surface must be provided beneath the climbing and swinging equipment and the fall zone from such equipment. Equipment five feet or higher need 6 inches resilient surface, equipment less than 5 feet need 3 inches of resilient surface.
- Use zones (also called “fall zones”) should surround equipment by 6 feet on all sides in general (see more detailed guidance in the DECAL publication “Applicant’s Guide to Licensing FCCLH”).
- A fence must be provided around swimming pools to make them inaccessible when not in use.
- Outside grounds and play areas must be kept clean and free of hazards. (Hazards may include but are not limited to; exposed sharp edges of concrete or equipment, broken glass, debris, open drainage ditches, holes and stagnant water.)

### **NOT PART OF LICENSING BUT PRACTICAL**

- Have the bathroom and warm running water in the child care area.
- It is best if children can enter directly from the outside into the child care room.
- If you have a gas meters and/or heating and cooling equipment within the designated outdoor play area, you may have to place a secure fence or barrier around them and at least 4 feet high.

### Zoning Requirements

As part of the licensing process, you must: *“Submit with the application a letter from the local zoning department indicating your residence is zoned for a Family Child Care, or a letter stating there are no zoning regulations”*. In most GA counties and often large cities, zoning laws are put in place to maintain a certain harmony to the community by limiting the uses of the land. These laws divide the county into “districts” or “zones” and determine in each district, what and where certain buildings may be built, how a building, even a private residence, can be used, what occupations may use those buildings, and so on.

Zoning laws control FCCLH operation in two ways. First, they can prohibit FCCLH altogether (Stockbridge GA), or allow it in “single family residential districts” but not in “multifamily residential districts” (Kennesaw GA). Second, they can establish “conditions” for approval which are expensive (such as requiring a six-foot fence, Savannah GA and other city-Counties) or

impractical (stating that there shall be no employees, Cobb County GA). It is important to know what district you live in, whether FCCLH home s are permitted, and what conditions apply.

### Fire Marshall Requirements

As part of the licensing process, you must “*Contact the local Fire Marshall to determine if there are local ordinances that apply to operating a Family Child Care Learning Home in your area*”. Some cities and counties do not require a fire inspection of a FCCLH home, but if they do, they may require that there be two exits from the child care area which lead directly outside. This may sound difficult but, one of the exits, can be a low window.

### Landlord and Homeowner Association Requirements

If you live in rented or leased space, your landlord will need to agree to using the residence for the FCCLH purpose. Even if you own your home but live in a community with a homeowner’s association, your covenants may prohibit you from using the home for a FCCLH business or require you obtain permission to do so. These topics will be addressed in an upcoming bulletin but, keep them in mind if you are thinking of changing residences.

### More Information About DECAL Licensing Requirements

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This website for overall information about licensing a FCCLH is:  
<http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/CCS/FamilyChildCareLearningHome.aspx>

There is also a Family Child Care Applicant Guide at  
<http://www.dec.al.ga.gov/documents/attachments/FCCLHRulesAndRegulations.pdf> and a Rules Checklist to help you determine if you meet the majority of the rules.

### \*More About **Explore-FCC**-We Are Here to Help

The **Explore-FCC** Career Success Project is available to provide coaching and other supports to individuals in Greater Atlanta seeking to open a Family Child Care Learning Home (FCCLH). **Explore-FCC** serves the 13 county greater Atlanta area with priority on zip codes with low or very low scores on Child Well-being measures established by United Way of Greater Atlanta. **Explore-FCC** helps individuals who are in the early stage of exploring family child care as a career, as well as those applying for a license to open a FCCLH home. The **Explore-FCC** Career Success Project is operated by the Professional Family Child Care Alliance of Georgia (PFCCAG) and funded by United Way of Greater Atlanta and Joseph B. Whitehead Foundation.

For more information and, to see if you qualify for one-on-one coaching, send an e-mail to [info@pfccag.org](mailto:info@pfccag.org) or visit the PFCCAG Website: [www.pfccag.org](http://www.pfccag.org).