

Professional Family Child Care Alliance of Georgia

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GA Family Child Care Learning Home Licensing Summary: High Standards for Health, Safety, Child Development, and Professionalism: A Practical Help Bulletin

***PURPOSE:** To inform city and county officials, landlords, and homeowner associations that Bright from the Start Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) licensing procedures concerning Family Child Care Learning Homes (FCCLH) are comprehensive and adequately address concerns regarding health, fire safety, accident prevention, emergency preparedness, and child protection.

Licensing Standards and Process.

DECAL has the legal responsibility to license Family Child Care Learning Homes (FCCLH)s. DECAL established over two hundred required standards addressing all elements of FCCLH operation. DECAL inspects homes before issuing a license. After receiving a license, homes receive at least two visits per year. One visit is an annual "licensing study" where all rules are evaluated, and one or more visits are "monitoring visits," which evaluate only the core rules affecting health, safety, and follow-ups to previously cited rules. An extract of key standards includes:

Education and In-service Requirements. All licensed providers are required to have a credential/degree ranging from a minimum of a Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) or Technical Certificate of Credit (TCC) in Early Childhood Education (or equivalent), up to a master's degree in Early Childhood Education. A 2-year waiver is available for those that do not meet the current educational requirement; within the two years, the provider must meet the credential-degree requirement. In addition, before opening, the provider must attend an FCCLH Licensing Orientation Meeting (FCCLH LOM), take CPR/First Aid training, and attend 10 hours of training addressing workforce knowledge competencies. These competencies include Early Learning Standards, Communication, Professional & Leadership Development, Business Management, and Advocacy for Parents, Children, and Staff. After opening, the provider must take 10 hours of additional training on these competencies every year.

Compliance with Local Requirements. Before opening their FCCLHs, providers must furnish proof to DECAL they comply with county/city requirements related to zoning, business permits, city sewer or septic tank inspection, as well as landlord permission (if applicable), Fire Marshall Inspection (if required), and an "Affidavit Authorizing Lawful Presence."

Criminal Background Checks. The provider and family members 17 years or older living in the home or having regular contact with the children, must complete a comprehensive criminal background check, including an FBI fingerprint, National Crime Information Center's National Sex Offender Registry; Georgia Child Abuse Registry, and Georgia Sex Offender Registry. If an individual lived in another state within the previous five years, that state's registries must also be checked.

Health, Safety, and Nutrition. The home must have a first aid kit (required supplies listed on the DECAL website), smoke detectors, fire extinguisher, operable telephone, safety gates (if needed to protect the children from steps or unused room), outlet covers, and covered and lined trashcans. There are requirements concerning equipment and process for changing diapers, handwashing, toilet sanitation, fire drills, other emergency drills, pet vaccination and supervision, and firearm safety. Toys and equipment are free from hazardous conditions and secured. The home must be kept free of fire hazards, and the providers have the training and a plan to handle fire and weather emergencies. Meals and snacks must be nutritious, well-balanced, and varied.

Supervision and Child Management. Providers are required to furnish continuous watchful supervision at all times. Discipline policies prohibit actions detrimental to the child's physical or mental health.

Children's Activities. The provider must offer a variety of daily activities appropriate for the children's chronological ages and developmental needs. Required activities include indoor/outdoor play, the balance of quiet, active, free choice, and child/caregiver-directed activities; small/large group/large muscle/small muscle, language, arts and crafts, dramatic play, music, and nature and science. Children must spend some time each day outdoors when health and weather permitting. Providers are encouraged to develop lesson plans based on the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS) - a set of high-quality, research-based early learning standards for children from birth to age five.

Outdoor Play Area. Outside play areas are protected from traffic or other hazards by fencing or other protective barriers at least four feet in height. Equipment must be secured, and the play area must have 3" mulch for equipment 3ft-5ft, or 6" of mulch for equipment 5ft or over (or another resilient surface throughout).

DECAL Monitoring. DECAL is responsible for monitoring all FCCLHs to ensure compliance with the rules and regulations. All complaints received related to FCCLHs must be investigated. All visits, whether initial licensing, routine monitoring, technical assistance, or complaint investigations, may be unannounced.

BOTTOM LINE. DECAL FCCLH standards are comprehensive and consistent statewide. Zoning ordinances should treat FCCLHs as an ordinary use of a residence. Ordinances that supersede licensing requirements make it costly and difficult to open or maintain an FCCLH, which limits access to much-needed child care services and harms the interests of children and working parents, and removes the opportunity for parents to have a choice when selecting child care.

***More About Us-We Are Here to Help**

The **Explore-FCC** project is available to provide coaching and other support to individuals in Greater Atlanta seeking to open a Family Child Care Learning Home (FCCLH). **Explore-FCC** serves the 13 counties 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 an FCCLH home. The **Explore-FCC** project is operated by the Professional Family Child Care Alliance of Georgia (PFCCAG) and funded by United Way of Greater Atlanta. For more information and to see if you qualify for one-on-one coaching, go to <https://www.pfccag.org/start>. We're here to be of service as you travel this journey of opening a Family Child Care Learning Home.

Thanks to 9to5 National Association for Working Women-GA for supporting this publication.