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Produced by the Family Child Care Alliance of Georgia

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An EXPLORE FCC Practical Help Bulletin

Family Child Care Learning Home (FCCLH):

Evaluating Yourself and Involving Your Family In The Decision To Open

**The EXPLORE-FCC Practical Help Bulletin Series**

This **Practical Help Bulletin** is part of a growing series of Bulletins designed to help those seeking to start a family child care learning home in Georgia. Other Bulletins currently in the series include:

* Family Child Care Learning Home (FCCLH): What is a License and When Do I Need One?
* What Kind of Training is Required Prior to Obtaining a License?
* Is My Home Suitable as a Family Child Care Learning Home?
* Caring for Children as a Support to Families and Source of Income
* How Much Can I Expect to Earn as FCCLH?

These and future documents in the series can be found at <https://www.pfccag.org/explore-fcc>

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This bulletin is based on the original work of Mary Lou Gilstad, University of Minnesota.

**Legal Notices**

This bulletin does not render legal or other professional advice concerning the child care licensing law or process. If you require such advice, please contact DECAL

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

**What is included in this bulletin?**

* Questions to help you determine if you have the personal characteristics and resources needed to become a FCCLH provider.
* Questions to discuss with your spouse/significant other about opening a FCCLH home.
* Questions to discuss with your family about sharing your home.

**A Career as a Family Child Care Learning Home Provider**

The Explore-FCC Career Success Project is pleased that you are exploring the idea of becoming a Family Child Care Learning Home (FCCLH) provider. FCCLH homes have unique qualities making them the preferred child care choice for many families. FCC Homes provide flexible hours and a comfortable family setting. Most homes offer full-day, part-day, and hourly care. Special features and services often include infant and toddler care, nontraditional hours care (evening and weekends), and care for children with special needs.

**Your Reasons for Wanting to be a FCCLH Provider may Include the Following:**

* To earn *an income* while staying at home with your own children.
* To provide a nurturing home-away-from-home atmosphere for children who cannot be with their own parents/guardians during the hours that child care is required.
* To help families who worry about having quality, reliable child care.
* To provide social experiences for your own children.
* To have your own business and be your own boss while legally complying with established licensing regulations.

**Things to Consider Before to Start a FCCLH:**

* Request a permission to open a FCCLH in your neighborhood from your landlord and HOA in writing. (For assistance, please contact your corresponded Coach)
* Per the Department of Early Care and Learning – Bright from the Start (DECAL) requirement you have to be prepared if you do not own the residence, you have to submit a copy of a current lease agreement that states you are allowed to operate a family child care in the residence. If you do own the residence, you have to submit proof of ownership such as a tax bill or tax assessment during your licensed process.

**Things to Consider About Yourself**

There are many things to consider before making a final decision. Thus, it is important to consider the following:

* Are you a healthy person (physically and mentally) and able to lift a child on a routine basis? How often do you have to visit a doctor for a medical condition?
* Are you a person who is calm and clear-headed in an emergency or unexpected crisis?
* Do you like children; are you prepared to accommodate different personality types among the children in your care (i.e., shy and hesitant vs. high-spirited and active)?
* Are you willing to abide by and uphold regulations not allowing the hitting, humiliating, frightening, or threatening of children in your care?
* Are you financially able to invest in start-up costs, purchase nutritional meals, provide art/craft materials and other equipment? You may receive help with some of these costs and can reasonably expect to earn your money back through parent fees. However, you will incur some initial operating costs and must be prepared to wait to recoup those initial expenses.
* Are you willing to attend training sessions that help you learn new ways of thinking about and working with children?
* In general, do you feel good about yourself as a person?
* We all face personal and family problems at one time or another, and you will be working in your home, which may be a reminder of those problems. Will you be able to put those troubles aside while you are caring for children?
* You will be working long hours often without any help from others. Young children can be a challenge, and they can be very active when your energy is low. Will you be able to manage your stress and find the energy you’ll need?
* Some parents who bring their children to your home will have different lifestyles from yours. Many times, you may not agree with the way certain parents behave or how they are raising their children. Will you be able to accept these parents as they are without judging or trying to “fix” them?
* Will you be able to care for their children without wanting to “rescue” them from parents who are unlike you? At the same time, do you understand you are obliged to report mistreatment or abuse of any type of the children?
* Sometimes parents will be delayed for work-related reasons, or occasionally, they may just be late in picking up their children? If this happens, will you be able to juggle your family responsibilities while still providing the same level of quality care?
* If your own children have behavioral problems at this time, providing playmates for them may not solve the situation. Indeed, it may aggravate it. So, you should ask yourself – do your children have any behavior problems which could affect or endanger the children you will care for?
* It is important to remember that child care in your home is a job like any other. Parents will be depending on you to provide quality care for their children. Therefore, you may be limited in the amount of adult interaction you have during the day. Are you emotionally prepared to handle this adjustment?
* Do you understand your professional child care obligations require your full attention, and you may not leave to go shopping or visiting during the day?

**Sharing Your Idea with Your Family**

As you know, you do not live in your house alone. You share your home with your family. At times, any family will find that they have trouble sharing space, possessions, available time, energy, and resources. At those times, they can become frustrated and angry, and they may even say things they later regret.

Now, you are considering opening your home to people who are **not** members of your immediate family - - to young children who may be strangers to you all. Their parents may be coming in and going out at inconvenient times. DECAL Licensing and other program staff (e.g., Child Care Resource and Referral representatives, Food Program evaluators, and local fire inspectors) will also visit from time to time. Therefore, it is important for you to talk to your family about sharing your personal home space with others. This way, you will know exactly where they stand on your decision to provide child care in your home – and theirs.

DECAL regulations require that the provider and every actual/potential employee (including individuals living in the home age 17 and older) must complete a criminal record and a comprehensive background check which includes a fingerprint check, a child abuse registry review, and a sex offender registry review. This is a lot to ask of your family.

It is important that you have a serious discussion with all members of your family who can understand what it is that you want to do and who can help you to make the right decision. We suggest that you pick a time that is convenient for everyone and when you are not likely to be interrupted. Taking notes might help be more objective which is important when making big decisions that affect your entire family.

**Your Spouse**

Here are some questions you might want to consider when talking to your spouse:

* Why am I thinking about doing child care in our home?
* What are the reasons I have for wanting to do this kind of work?
* Are we all willing to share space with the children in my care? What space, equipment, or furniture are we **not** willing to share? How will we make that space, equipment, or furniture “off-limits” or put away during child care hours?
* Are our children willing to share me with the other children who will be in my care?
* Do we all understand that personal visitors to our home may have to be limited?
* Do we all understand there will be some changes in the way we dress and present ourselves?
* Do we understand there can be “no smoking on child care premises,” and we may need to curtail or eliminate the use of alcohol when child care children are present?
* Do we all realize children may be in our home during some holidays as well as other days when we are off work and out of school?
* Do you understand and accept that financial contracts and discipline policies are between the parents and me and that you should not get involved?
* Do we as a family have any problems or grudges with neighbors which could lead to false complaints, false charges of child abuse?
* How about our pets? Will they be affected by our decision to do child care? If so, what will we do to address and resolve this concern?
* Do we recognize that if we need to have repair or renovation work done on our house, it most likely will need to be done during hours when the family child care business is closed?

**Other Family Members**

Some important reasons to talk with your family about providing child care in your home include:

* The way that you and your spouse discipline your children might be different from what regulations state a provider can and cannot do with the children in care. How your spouse reacts to new ways of thinking about children could be a problem. How your own children react to new ways of disciplining could be another problem.
* Many injuries to young children happen with regularly used items like; curling irons, clothes irons, medicine, guns, hobby items, sharp household objects, and other things that are in reach of young children. How careful your family is willing to be is important

to the success of your new business.

* All members of a family do not have the same tolerance levels for noise, messes, crying, and interruptions. How your family will be able to deal with extra stress is something you should consider.
* Adults, adolescents, and school-age children other than family members will not have free access to the house while you are caring for children.
* Having to limit time with friends and neighbors could also be a concern to everyone.
* Sometimes, you will need help from members of your family after school, in the evenings, and on the weekends. If they are willing and able to be helpful inappropriate ways, it will be a blessing. If not, your own stress and fatigue could be a problem.
* Whether you offer care during the normal workweek or on evenings and weekends, the needs of your family should be considered. Individual health issues sometimes need to be considered, too, especially if any members of your family must sleep during the day or are chronically ill. You need to be especially careful of the decision you are making about child care.
* There will be changes in your home such as rearrangement of furniture, the addition of safety latches on your doors, and finding new places for articles used in the bathroom and kitchen. Some members of your family may have a hard time with these adjustments.
* Many families dress casually in the privacy of their homes. Some family members wear bathrobes and slippers until late in the morning. Some like to relax in underwear or other scanty clothing. If your family is casual in this way now, they may frown on having to be “dressed” at all times during child care hours.
* You probably have a daily schedule now. You eat at certain times, shop on particular days and times, and visit friends on a regular basis. Providing child care will significantly change your routine. The new schedule may seem to favor the children in care more than your own family members. As a result, family members may resent the changes, and how much they are willing to adapt could be a problem.
* Family members will want some parts of the home to be off-limits. Deciding how much of the living space should remain that of the family only and how much can be used by the children in care must be agreed upon by all.
* Sometimes spouses are unaware of the costs and financial requirements to maintain a quality child care environment and that some of the earned income will need to be applied to these expenses. So, you must discuss the necessary financial outlay and upkeep expenses. Also, be sure to talk about the additional wear and tear on furniture, carpets, and walls.
* Use of the TV will need to be limited during the child care hours, including soap operas, X or R rated videos or some teenage videos which are inappropriate for young children. This limitation could be a problem for some members of the family.

Explore-FCC staff believes that, in this bulletin, we have raised the most important concerns for you and your family to consider. If you make the decision not to become a FCCLH Provider, it does not mean that you can never provide child care. It simply means that it may not be wise to do it in your home at this time. However, if you make the decision to proceed with opening a FCCLH home, welcome to your new profession, and know we are here to help you all the way.

\*\*The Explore-FCC Career Success Project is available to provide One-On-One 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 family child care home. The Explore-FCC Career Success Project is operated by the Professional Family Child Care Alliance of Georgia (PFCCAG) and funded by the United Way of Greater Atlanta/ 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 or visit the PFCCAG Website: [www.pfccag.org](http://www.pfccag.org).