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**SUMMARY  
OF LICENSING  
STANDARDS  
FOR  
GROUP DAY  
CARE HOMES**

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## **Introduction**

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is responsible for licensing group day care homes. When a group day care home is licensed, it means that a DCFS licensing representative has inspected the home and found the group day care home to meet the minimum licensing requirements. A license is valid for three years. No group day care home operator may care for more than a total of sixteen children, including the caregiver's own children under age 12.

The group day care home license must be prominently displayed in the home at all times. It will list the caregiver's name, how many children may be cared for in the home, the areas of the home that may be used for child care and whether night care can also be provided. Licensed group day care homes are inspected annually by DCFS. If a complaint has been received regarding a violation of the licensing standards by a group day care home, a licensing representative will conduct a licensing complaint investigation to determine if the alleged violations should be substantiated or unsubstantiated. Substantiated violations are reported to individuals who call the Day Care Information Line. Substantiated violations must be posted in a prominent area of the home until corrected.

## **Day Care Information Line**      **1-877-746-0829**

This statewide toll-free information line provides information to the public on the past history and record, including substantiated violations, of licensed day care homes, day care centers and group day care homes. This number operates Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

## **Summary of Licensing Standards for Group Day Care Homes**

The following summary of the licensing standards for group day care homes has been prepared for you so that you may monitor the care provided to your child. This is a summary and does not include all of the licensing standards for a group day care home. State licensing standards are *minimum* standards. If you notice a violation of any of these standards, you are encouraged to discuss your concerns with the group day care home provider. In most cases, parents and caregivers are able to resolve parents' concerns.

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If you believe the caregiver is not responding to your concerns and may not be meeting state licensing standards, you may make a complaint to the local DCFS Licensing Office. A DCFS licensing representative will investigate your complaint and report the results back to you.

## **Caregivers, Assistants and Family Members**

- The caregiver must be at least 21 years old.
  - The caregiver must have achieved one year of credit (30 semester/45 quarter hours) from an accredited college/university **or** one year prior work experience in a nursery school, kindergarten or licensed day care center **and** six semester or equivalent quarter hours in child care/child development course work from an accredited college/university.
  - The caregiver may have a current Child Development Credential in lieu of the college hours or work experience.
  - Caregivers must have 15 hours of in-service training per year.
  - A full time assistant must be 18 years old. An assistant 18 years or older may accompany children playing outdoors and may transport children, if the assistant possesses a valid driver's license and insurance.
  - Assistants under age 18 must work under the direct personal supervision of the caregiver at all times.
  - Part-time assistants must be at least 14 years old and five years older than the oldest child they supervise.
  - Caregivers, assistants and all other adult members of the household are subject to background checks for any record of criminal conviction or child abuse and neglect. A caregiver's children age 13 and older are subject to abuse and neglect background checks.
  - A person certified in first aid, including CPR and the Heimlich maneuver, must be present at all times during hours of operation.
  - Operation of another business on the premises must not interfere with the care of children.
  - A substitute caregiver, at least 21 years of age, may be used in the home up to 25 hours per month and for an additional period of up to two weeks in a 12-month period.
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- The caregiver must have a plan which has been discussed with parents regarding child care services if/when the caregiver is ill or absent from the home during day care hours.

## **Requirements for the Home**

The group day care home must have the following:

- A first-aid kit.
- An operable fire extinguisher and a flashlight in working order.
- Protective coverings for all electrical outlets within reach of young children.
- At least one operating smoke detector on every room where children nap or sleep, including basements and occupied attics.
- Partitions or sturdy barriers to prevent contact with any fixed space heater, fireplace, radiator or other heating sources in areas occupied by children.
- Written plans for evacuation in case of emergency.
- An operable telephone available on the premises.
- Hot and cold running water.
- Water temperature must not be higher than 115° F at faucets for children's hand washing sinks.

Additional requirements:

- The facility must be maintained in a clean, safe and sanitary condition, free of observable hazards. Exit doors must be kept clear of equipment and debris at all times.
  - Portable space heaters may not be used during hours that day care is provided.
  - A basement may be used for child care only if the license lists the basement as an area where care can be provided.
  - First-aid supplies, medication, cleaning materials, poisons, tools, gardening equipment and other hazardous materials must be stored in places inaccessible to children.
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- Handguns are prohibited on the premises except in the possession of peace officers or other adults who must possess a handgun as a condition of employment and who reside in the day care home.
  - Any other firearm must be kept disassembled, without ammunition, in a locked storage facility inaccessible to children. Ammunition must be kept locked in storage separate from the firearm.
  - In the event that handguns and/or other firearms and ammunition are stored on the premises, parents or guardians must be notified.
  - Fire and tornado drills must be conducted and documented monthly.
  - Swimming pools located in areas accessible to children must be fenced and secured with a locked gate.
  - Healthy household pets, that present no danger to children, are permitted. Dogs and cats must be inoculated for rabies.
  - Wild and dangerous animals as well as monkeys, ferrets, turtles, iguanas and birds of the parrot family must not be accessible to children during child care operation hours.
  - Smoking tobacco is prohibited in any area of the group day care home in which day care services are being provided to children while those children are present on the premises. No person may smoke tobacco while providing transportation to children receiving day care services.
  - There must be safe outdoor space for active play in yards, nearby parks or playgrounds.
  - Adult supervision, in accordance with the child/staff ratio requirements, must be provided at all times during indoor or outdoor activities. Children must never be left unattended.
  - Hot tubs must have locked covers or be inaccessible to children.
  - Free-hanging cords on blinds, shades and drapes must be tied or kept out of reach of children.
  - Only new cribs manufactured on or after June 28, 2011 must be in place.
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## Admission and Discharge

- Parents must be provided a certified copy of the child's birth certificate when enrolled for the first time (the original certificate will be returned to the parent within 24 hours)
- No child served shall remain on the premises for more than 12 hours in any 24-hour period.
- A child shall be discharged from the group day care home only to the child's parents or guardian or person designated by the parents/guardian.

## Number and Ages of Children Served

A caregiver alone may care for:

- Up to a total of eight children under 12 years of age, with no more than five under five years old and no more than three under 24 months; or
- Up to a total of eight children under 12 years of age, with no more than six under five years and no more than two under 30 months, or
- Up to eight pre-school children if no child is under age three; or
- Up to 12 school age children.

A caregiver and an 18 year-old assistant may care for:

- Up to a total of 12 children between three and six years of age, or
- Up to a total of 12 children under six years of age, with no more than six under 30 months and no more than four under 15 months.

A caregiver, an assistant and a part-time assistant may care for:

- Four additional children who attend school full-time before and/or after school.

## Home schooled children

- Children who are being home schooled are included in the capacity unless another parent or caregiver is providing the schooling apart from the day care area and the caregiver has no responsibility for the care or supervision or schooling of the children during the hours home day care is provided.
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## Health

- A medical report indicating that the child has been appropriately immunized must be on file for each child. Parents are encouraged to be informed about childhood immunizations by going to the following Web site: [http://www.state.il.us/dcf/daycare/Childhood\\_Immunizations.shtml](http://www.state.il.us/dcf/daycare/Childhood_Immunizations.shtml). The initial medical report must include a tuberculin skin test, unless waived by a physician, and a lead screening or lead risk assessment for children from six months to six years of age.
- The medical report is valid for two years except that subsequent examinations for school-age children must be in accordance with the requirements of the public schools.
- Prescription and non-prescription medication may be administered upon receipt of written permission of the parent or guardian. The caregiver must maintain a record of the dates, hours and dosages given.
- Each child must have a bed, cot, crib or playpen with individual bedding. A twin size bed may be used for two children under age four, provided each child has individual sheets.
- Caregivers and children must wash hands before meals, after toileting and after contact with respiratory secretions.
- There must be an emergency plan for each child in case of accident or sudden illness.

## Program

- There must be a balance of active and quiet play and both indoor and outdoor activities. Children, including infants and toddlers, must be taken outdoors for a portion of every day, weather permitting.
  - Sufficient, age appropriate materials and equipment must be available and arranged in clearly defined areas of interest.
  - Parents or guardians must be permitted to visit the home, without prior notice, during the hours their children are in care.
  - The following are prohibited:
    - physical punishment, shaming, frightening, or humiliating
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- verbal abuse, threats, or derogatory remarks about the child or the child's family
  - depriving a child of a meal
  - punishment for toilet accidents
- Removal of a child from the group to "time-out," is permitted for children two years old or older, however, the amount of time, in minutes, must not exceed the child's age in years.
  - Discipline must be handled by an adult caregiver only.
  - Children may be released only to their parents or guardians or to persons designated, in writing, by the parent or guardian.
  - The group day care home cannot be licensed to provide care for more than 18 hours in a 24-hour period.
  - Group day care homes will have a written policy explaining to the parents and guardians what actions the caregiver will take when children are not pick up at the agreed time.
  - All children must be directly supervised at all times when children are wading or swimming. A second adult must be available to supervise any children not swimming.

### **School-Age Children**

- A snack must be served when children arrive after school.
- A designated area must be provided so that older children's presence does not interfere with the care of younger children.
- Children who come to the home from school for lunch must be served a nutritionally balanced meal.

### **Children Under 30 Months of Age**

- Children are not permitted in bathrooms, kitchens or other hazardous areas without the caregiver or assistant present.
  - Routines such as naps and feedings must be discussed with parents and be consistent with the child's routine at home. Non-mobile children who are awake must be moved to different positions and must be held,
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rocked, and carried about. Children must be placed on their backs for sleeping, unless contraindicated by a physician, and must be held while being bottle-fed until they are at least six months of age. Soft bedding and other soft products must be removed from cribs when children are napping or sleeping.

- Bottles must not be propped.
- Proper standards of hygiene must be observed in the home. Caregivers must wash their hands before the feeding of each child.
- Foods stored or prepared in jars must be served from a separate dish for each child and leftovers from each dish must be discarded.
- Persons changing diapers must wash their hands and the child's hands under running water with soap after each change of diaper.
- A facility serving infants and/or toddlers must have safe, sturdy, well-constructed individual cribs, playpens or port-a-cribs that are equipped with good, firm, fitting mattresses made of waterproof materials. Washable cots may be used for children 15 months of age and older.
- Equipment and play materials must be durable and free from characteristics that may be hazardous or injurious to children, including: sharp, rough edges; toxic paint and objects small enough to be swallowed.

## **Night Care**

- The child in care must be bathed, if needed. Children under five years of age must not be left unattended while in the bathtub.
  - A bed, crib or cot and individual linen and bedding must be provided for each child. A double bed must be the minimum size for sleeping two children of the same sex.
  - An evening meal that meets nutritional requirements must be served at a regular time each evening and a bedtime snack provided to each child.
  - Children who remain overnight and go to school directly from the home must have breakfast, including juice or fruit, unless they are receiving breakfast at school.
  - Unrelated children over four years of age may not share a bedroom overnight with children of the opposite sex.
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- The caregiver must sleep on the same floor where children sleep and be within hearing distance of the children in care.

## **Nutrition and Meals**

The facility must provide one-third to two-thirds of the daily nutritional requirements, depending on the length and time of day of the child's stay. Food requirements for children between birth and the age of eating table food must meet the individual needs of the child, determined in consultation with the parents.

## **Transportation**

- Children may be transported only by persons 18 years of age or older. No child may be left unattended in a vehicle.
- Each child must be individually fastened into a suitable infant or child restraint device that is federally approved.

## **Records and Reports**

- Suspected child abuse and/or neglect must be reported to the Department immediately.
- The caregiver must respect the confidential nature of the child/ family records.
- The parent or guardian must provide written consent forms that give the caregiver permission to do the following: secure emergency medical care; administer medication; allow for someone other than parent or guardian to pick up the child; take trips or excursions off the premises; provide transportation and allow the child to use the facility's swimming pool, when/if a situation is applicable.

*This summary has been developed to assist parents in monitoring the care provided by the day care home. Licensing Standards for Group Day Care Homes may be accessed through the DCFS website: [www2.illinois.gov/DCFS](http://www2.illinois.gov/DCFS). You may also contact your nearest DCFS office for assistance. Locations of DCFS offices are also available on the DCFS website.*



State of Illinois  
Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

**VERIFICATION OF RECEIPT**

I/WE, \_\_\_\_\_  
Please Print Name(s)

parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, hereby certify that I/we have  
Name(s) of Child(ren)

received a copy of a summary of licensing standards printed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent Date

**THIS COMPLETED FORM IS TO BE PLACED IN EACH CHILD'S FILE AT THE DAY CARE FACILITY.**

