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| <b>OCFP</b><br>Office<br>of<br>Child and<br>Family Policy | <b>Department of Children and Family Services</b>   |  |
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|   | <b>Key Words: 89 Ill. Adm. Code 407, Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers, Cell Phones</b>        |  |
|   | <b>Approved by:</b>   |  |

### Interpretation

**Applicable To:** Licensed Day Care Centers

**Policy Citation:** 407.370(r): There shall be means for communication in emergencies.

- 1) An operable non-coin telephone shall be on the premises, easily accessible for use in an emergency and for other communications.
- 3) In facilities where communication between groups is difficult due to the design of the day care center, operation in multiple buildings on the same site or on multiple floors, an intercom or a written plan for other effective means of communication between groups shall be provided.
- 4) During hours of operation and at all times that children are present, there shall be a means for parents of enrolled children to have direct telephone contact with a center staff person.

**Question:** Are cell phones an acceptable telephone instrument to meet the licensing requirements for day care centers?

**Discussion:** The intent of subsection 407.370(r) is that an available means of communication be accessible in an emergency. Subsection 407.370(r)(1) requires that an operable non-coin telephone be available on the premises. Cell phones are non-coin telephones, and the center can prove that they are operable.

Cell phones provide some benefits that fixed units do not, such as the mobility of the phone in cases of an emergency. A cell phone allows an individual to be with a child at risk and on the phone accessing help at the same time. A cell phone allows for convenient communication between facilities operating in multiple buildings. A cell phone can also be accessed on field trips outside of the facility.

The primary disadvantage is that the batteries run down. Alternative means can be used to assure that access can still be allowed, such as multiple charged batteries and cords that can be used to activate the phone as an alternative to batteries. Such alternatives should be discussed with the day care center to assure that the center has arranged for

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full access during business hours and at all times that children are present.

**Response:** Cell phones are acceptable telephone instruments to meet the telephone requirements under 89 Ill. Adm. Code 407, Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers.