



# A Parent's Guide to Child Care

## Dear Parent:

*When you choose licensed child care, you and your family join your child in new experiences and relationships. You, the child-care director, child-care staff, and other people in the child-care center have a responsibility to protect the health, safety, and well-being of your child. [The Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, Licensing Division](#), is part of this partnership, too.*



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## What is child-care licensing?

- The Licensing Division was established by law to regulate child-care facilities to help protect the health, safety, and well-being of children in care.
- With the assistance of child-care providers and experts in areas such as child development, early childhood education, fire safety, health, and sanitation, the Licensing Division develops minimum standards.
- Licensing staff inspect child-care centers, private kindergartens and nursery schools, some unaccredited private schools, group child-care homes, and drop-in care centers to be sure that minimum standards are met. The staff also investigate complaints about violations of the minimum standards and the child-care licensing law.

Your child-care facility is responsible for meeting minimum standards. Many child-care programs exceed these requirements. Licensing does not regulate child-care fees, collection policies, or the kind of learning program your child-care facility offers. Each facility has its own special personality and approach to educating and caring for children. Parents can choose the kind of program that best meets the needs of their child and family.

## Suggestions for parents

Choose your child-care facility carefully.

- When you visit a child-care facility, ask to see the license. The license means that the child-care facility met the minimum licensing standards the last time it was inspected for such things as fire, sanitation, and safety; the number of child-care staff required; staff qualifications; and requirements for special services.

A copy of the minimum standards is available for you to review at your child-care facility. You can also request a copy of these standards from your local child-care licensing office.

## Establish a good relationship with the child-care facility

- Spend time at the child-care facility before you enroll your child. Ask questions about the program and observe the activities. Make sure the child-care facility has all the information needed about your child and family to provide good care.
- Work with the staff of the child-care facility you choose. Parent involvement is an important part of a successful experience with child care.
- Read all the material the child-care provider gives you. In addition to material required by licensing standards, each facility has its own policies and requirements. It's important that you understand these requirements before you enroll your child. It's equally important, once your child is in care, to read the notices, special requests, notes, and other materials the child-care provider sends home.
- Drop in occasionally during the day to observe how your child interacts with staff and other children, and get a good picture of the day-to-day activities at the center. Be careful not to disrupt activities.
- Keep your side of the bargain. Pick up your child on time.
- Discuss concerns with the child-care director. Be aware that the teacher's main responsibility is working with the children. Don't be offended if the teacher can't spend much time talking with you when you drop off or pick

up your child. If you need more time to talk about your child, set up a conference.

- It's important to let the child-care facility know about things at home that may affect how your child is doing in child care.

### **When your child starts child care**

- Remember that it's normal for a child to have some fears and misgivings about starting child care. Children need time to get used to new situations. Prepare your children for the change as far in advance as possible. Discuss their concerns. If you're enthusiastic, chances are they soon will be, too.
- Depending on their ages, some children will temporarily "act out" their feelings by clinging to you and refusing to let go, forgetting their toilet training, having bad dreams, sucking their thumbs, or other such behavior.

Work with the child-care director and your child's teacher on this.

### **Talk things over with your child**

- Make an opportunity each day to gently ask questions when your children are quiet and feeling secure and protected. Share their excitement about new friends, new skills, and new abilities; listen to their concerns; and give them a chance to boast about their achievements.

### **Parent responsibilities**

The child-care facility must get certain information and records from parents to ensure the child's health and safety, handle emergencies, and meet minimum standards. If you do not provide this material, the child-care facility will not be in compliance with the minimum standards.

- Complete an enrollment form that includes basic information about your child; telephone numbers where you can be reached during the day; authorization for emergency care for your child; and written permission for swimming, other water activities, and transportation services.
- Tell the caregiver about any special concerns or needs, including allergies, medical history, and current medications.
- Give the child-care facility a copy of your child's immunization record showing immunizations against diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, and Haemophilus influenzae type b. In some parts of Texas, a tuberculosis test report is also required. For school-age children, you can sign a statement that these records are on file at the school.
- Provide a doctor's statement that your preschool child is physically able to participate in the child-care program.
- Inform the child-care facility in writing about who is permitted to take your child from the facility. Generally, the child-care facility may only release your child to you or to an adult you designate.
- The facility may allow a school-age child to leave the facility alone or allow an older brother or sister to pick up a child if you request this in writing. The facility is only allowed to do this when all safety considerations have been met.
- Make sure that child-care staff know the child has arrived. Make sure that staff are aware when you come to pick up your child. Don't leave your child at the front door, and never leave your child at the facility before opening or after closing.
- Other requirements must be met if the child-care provider gives medication to your child, if your child is an infant, or if your child needs special care or a special diet.

### **What happens if your child is ill or injured?**

- The child-care facility is not allowed to admit a child who seems to be sick unless a doctor or nurse gives approval in writing. This may cause problems for parents, but it is necessary to prevent a sick child from infecting other children.
- If your child has been absent because of a contagious illness, the child-care facility must follow guidelines concerning when the child can return to child care.

- If your child appears seriously sick or injured while at the center, the caregiver must call you immediately. It's important that you pick up your child as soon as possible.
- If your child needs immediate medical attention, the center must call your child's physician, take the child to the nearest emergency room or minor emergency clinic, or call for an ambulance. This is why the child-care facility must have your authorization for emergency medical care.

### **Liability insurance requirements**

- Ask the child-care director whether or not the facility carries liability insurance. Texas law requires child-care facilities to carry liability coverage in the amount of \$300,000 per occurrence to cover a child when the child is in care of the facility.
- Liability insurance coverage is not required if the insurance cannot be secured due to financial reasons; if the licensee is unable to locate an underwriter willing to issue a policy; or if the current policy limits have been extended. You are to be notified, in writing, that the coverage is not available.

### **Take a good look**

As you become more familiar with your child's child-care program, you will see many strong points. Almost all child-care facilities strive to provide a warm, loving, safe, and healthy environment for children. Look for these characteristics, but also be aware of warning signals that tell you something is wrong.

### **Feel secure when you see that:**

- the facility welcomes you to visit any time, and you are invited to observe the class or participate in activities.
- staff are alert and involved with the children.
- staff seem warm and interested in the children. There is spontaneous laughter, hugging, and eye-to-eye contact.
- staff are gentle, but firm when necessary.
- the facility is clean and attractive.
- your child is relaxed and happy after the initial adjustment period.
- your child seems physically well cared for. Staff inform you of minor accidents and tell you when your child doesn't feel well.
- children seem involved with constructive activities, and they get individual attention.

### **Be seriously concerned when you see that:**

- parents are not encouraged to visit the facility.
- children are left without direct adult supervision.
- adults spend much time scolding, ordering, and yelling at children.
- adults are physically rough with children or allow rough play.
- the building is dirty, or you see unsafe conditions.
- your child is unhappy about being left at the facility, and this doesn't improve with time.
- a child comes home bruised or injured, and the center can't explain what happened. (The child may not remember minor bruises and scrapes received when playing, however.)
- children seem aimless, bored, angry, or frustrated, or there are too many children to supervise.

### **When things aren't going well**

You may find yourself displeased about something that has happened at the facility. Talk about these things with facility staff. There may be a misunderstanding that can easily be resolved.

If the situation isn't resolved and you believe minimum standards are not being met, call the local child-care licensing office. They will handle your call discreetly.

A licensing representative will investigate your complaint. The licensing representative may need to interview you and your child and may also interview other children at the facility.

If the licensing representative finds that a standard has been violated, the facility will be notified and a time set for the facility to correct it.

Licensing staff may revoke a license if a facility doesn't meet minimum standards. The department does not take action to revoke a license unless children are in immediate danger or the licensee refuses to comply with standards.

### **If you suspect child abuse**

Most child-care facilities, like most parents, take good care of children. Child abuse is rare, and it is very unlikely that anything like this will happen to your child.

If you do suspect that your child has been abused or sexually molested, report the situation immediately. Use the toll-free Child Abuse Hotline number (1-800-252-5400), available 24 hours a day. If you think the abuse occurred in a child-care facility, call your child-care licensing office. The situation will be investigated immediately, and you will be given referrals or recommendations for help for your child and family.

Should agency staff interview or examine your child during an abuse investigation, a reasonable effort will be made to notify you within 24 hours after the interview or examination.

Parents who suspect or believe that their child has been abused in child care sometimes remove their child from care, but don't report the problem. This leaves other children in danger. State law requires you to report suspected child abuse.

Should testimony in court be needed, you may be able to testify on behalf of your child if you were the first person to hear your child's story.

When people make a report of suspected child abuse in good faith, they are immune from any liability. If a complaint is made with malicious intent or for revenge, there is no liability protection.

When the department investigates a complaint, the identity of the complainant is not revealed. Everyone, including child-care providers, is required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect immediately.

## **Local Child-care Licensing Office**

### **Central Texas - Austin**

P.O. Box 15995  
Austin, Texas 78761  
(512) 908-9650

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OPERATIONAL POLICIES  
STRICKLAND EXTENDED CARE  
447-1777

Strickland Extended Care is open from 3:00pm to 6:00pm every day that Strickland Christian School is open. All financial arrangements must be made through the central office and the school bookkeeper.

Your child may be enrolled any time during the school year by filling out an enrollment form, paying the registration fee, and providing the school with immunization records (complying with state mandated immunizations). Students in K-4, K-5, 1st, 3rd, 5th, and 7th grades will receive a vision and hearing screening administered by a qualified health care professional. Fifth grade students (and sixth grade students when necessary) will also receive a spinal screening on the same day. These screenings are mandated by the State of Texas and will occur early in the school year. If there is a change in enrollment policies you will be informed at the beginning of the school year in writing.

If you need to contact the Extended Care staff for any reason after 3:00 pm you will not be able to reach them at the main office number. The Extended Care number is 447-1777.

Medical Information: If your child becomes ill while in care we will contact the parent or guardian by phone to apprise you of the child's health situation. The child will be isolated from other children if we feel his or her condition is contagious. Medicine will be administered per your request or written permission if we cannot contact you. If a medication is administered you will be asked to sign a form stating when the medicine was administered, how much was given and the type of medicine. If an emergency arises and parents or doctors cannot be contacted we will call EMS. Please make sure all of your phone numbers at work and cell phone numbers remain current so that we can contact you.

Procedures for release: When you enroll your child you fill out a pick-up authorization form. The only people to whom we will release your child must be on that list. If we are not familiar with the person picking up your child, he or she may be asked to show identification. If you have a change to make on the list please make sure the Extended Care, and not simply the child's classroom teacher has those changes. In case of an emergency you may call with the name of a person who is temporarily picking up your child. That person may be asked to show identification. If someone comes who is not on your list for child pick-up, and we cannot reach you, we will not release your child to him. When you come to pick up your child, we will ask you to sign that child out by using your signature or initials and the time.

#### Discipline and Guidance

Discipline will be individualized and consistent for each child, appropriate to the child's level of understanding and directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.

The caregiver will use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include:

1. Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior;
2. Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements;
3. Redirecting behavior using positive statements;
4. Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to not more than one minute per year of the child's age.

There will be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child.

The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:

1. Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment;
2. Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training;
3. Pinching, shaking, or biting a child;
4. Hitting a child with a hand or an instrument;
5. Putting anything in or on a child's mouth;
6. Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child;
7. Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language;
8. Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed;
9. Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.

Snacks for children in Extended Care are provided by the Extended Care Program.

Procedures for obtaining information

Parents or guardians may contact the Extended Care director at any time by leaving a message with the school office or the Extended Care phone number (447-1777) during Extended Care hours. The director is available to answer any questions and review policies of the Extended Care program. Parents or guardians may request to see a copy of the minimum standards and the Extended Care's most recent licensing inspection report. Parents or guardians may visit the Extended Care at any time, and are welcome to participate in our activities. If a parent needs to contact the local licensing office, he may do so by calling 834-3195 or viewing the website at [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us). The child abuse hotline is 1-800-252-5400.

**SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Health Certification Form

Child' Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**THIS IS TO BE COMPLETED ONLY IF YOUR CHILD IS UNDER 5 YEARS OLD**

**IF YOUR CHILD IS UNDER 5, THE STATE OF TEXAS REQUIRES PROOF OF THE CHILD'S HEALTH BY ONE OF 5 (FIVE) WAYS:**

**ADMISSION REQUIREMENT: ONE OF THE FOLLOWING MUST BE PRESENTED WHEN YOUR PRESCHOOL AGE CHILD IS ADMITTED TO THE DAY CARE FACILITY OR WITHIN ONE WEEK OF ADMISSION. CHECK TO INDICATE THE OPTION YOU SELECT: (YOU MUST MARK, A, B, C, D OR E)**

\_\_\_\_\_ A. DOCTOR'S STATEMENT: I have examined the above child within the past year and find that he/she is physically able to take part in the day care program.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Physician's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_ B. A copy of the medical screening form of the Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT) Program, if no referral for further diagnosis and treatment is indicated.

\_\_\_\_\_ C. A form or written statement form a health service or clinic.

\_\_\_\_\_ D. PARENT'S STATEMENT: My child has been examined within the past year by a licensed physician and is able to participate in the day care program.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Physician of EPSDT Screening Site

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address of EPSDT Screening Site

Within the next 12 months, I will obtain a physician's statement, a copy of the medical screening form from the EPSDT Program, or a form or statement from a health service or clinic and will submit it to the day care facility.

**OR**

\_\_\_\_\_ E. My child has an appointment for a physical examination:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name and Address of Physician OR Address of EPSDT Screening Site

I will submit the physician's statement, EPSDT form, or health service or clinic form to the day care facility following the examination.

**IF YOU CHOSE "D" OR "E",**

**YOU MUST SIGN HERE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_**

**NOTE: If medical diagnosis and treatment and/or immunization and TB testing conflict with your religious beliefs, you must sign an affidavit to that effect and attach it to this form. If immunization and/or TB testing would be injurious to your child or family, you must obtain a certificate (signed by a physician) to the effect and attach it to this form.**

## ● Checklist for Extended Care Registration

**To reserve a place for your child in the Extended Care Program (3-6 p.m.), you must:**

- Read “A Parent’s Guide to Day Care.” You may keep this for your records.
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- Read and sign “Operational Policies—Strickland Extended Care.”
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- Complete the Extended Care Enrollment Form.
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- Complete Health Certification Form (for children under 5 years old as of 8/30/09).

**Provide current immunization records.**

Write a check for \$30 for the Extended Care registration fee.

**Enclose Enrollment Form, Operational Policy, and Health Certification (if applicable) in the envelope with school registration forms and return to the school office.**

Please note: all forms are available on the school website.

Student’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_