

PINELLAS COUNTY LICENSE BOARD FOR CHILDREN'S CENTERS
AND FAMILY DAY CARE HOMES
Minutes for the Public Hearing of
December 3, 2008

APPROVED MINUTES

The Public Hearing of the Pinellas County License Board for Children's Centers and Family Day Care Homes was scheduled and properly noticed for Wednesday, December 3, 2008, at 4175 East Bay Drive, Suite 350, Clearwater, to begin at 6:30 p.m.

Board Members Present: Lourdes Benedict, Chairman; Donna Huard; Donna Rippley, Judi Vitucci

Board Members Absent: Commissioner Bostock, Barbra Mastrota; Elise Minkoff

Ex Officio Member Absent: Charles Minor

Advisory Members Present: Lynn Bittner, Heidi Buck, Terri Hajian, Ann Hofmeister

Advisory Members Absent: Sharon Carder

County Attorney Present: Colleen Flynn

Staff Members Present: Carla Doenges, Executive Director; Suzie Lewis, Supervisor Children's Centers; Kathy Krause, Supervisor Family Day Care Homes; Dana Stajkowski, Recording Secretary; and other Health Department staff

Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

Staff Comment: Carla Doenges reported to the Board and attendees that based on Public Comment during the September 23, 2008 meeting when the proposed regulations were first presented to Board, that staff have reviewed and agreed with providers that the following words cause confusion:

- "Exclusively" in standard IV.C.2. [which reads] All family day care homes must have . . . outdoor play area . . . exclusively used for the children attending or residing at the family day care home.
- Staff understands that anyone in the home has use of the property and that providers cannot set aside a part of the property to be used exclusively for the children; that providers must look closely at the area and remove anything that is harmful to children.

Minutes – 12/3/08 Public Hearing

Staff Comment Continued:

- “Any age” in standard I.C. The number of children in a family day care home . . . Preschool household members, whether present or not, and children of any age who are in the operator’s care . . . are counted in the license capacity. Staff have compared state standards with License Board standards and agree that the age of child care does not exceed 13 years of age. Staff will recommend to the Board that the words “any age” be removed from this standard and the Definition of Family Day Care Homes.

Public Hearing for Children’s Centers 6:30 p.m.

There were no comments made to the Board.

Public Hearing for Family Day Care Homes 6:45 p.m.

Public Comment:

Lynn Gibson, 8697 78th Avenue North, Largo 33777
I.C. Supervision

Ms. Gibson reported that she is the area representative for providers and attends both associations - Heart to Heart and Pinellas Providers and attends 4 quarterly state meetings. She reported that family day care children give up a lot – their toys, their yard, their bedrooms. The new rule which states “when household school age children under 13 years of age are present, the supervision of these children must comply with section I.C. 6.”

[I.C.6. states – this was added for clarification
At all times, which includes when the children are napping or sleeping, the operator shall remain responsible for the supervision of the children in care and capable of responding to emergencies and the needs of the children. While children are napping or sleeping in bedrooms, the bedroom doors must remain open. During the day time hours of operation, children shall have adult supervision which means watching and directing children’s activities, both indoors and outdoors, and responding to each child’s needs.]

Ms. Gibson stated that it is her understanding that according to DCF, when the provider’s child is in the home the child counts in the capacity, but when the child leaves [the premises] the child does not count in the capacity.

Minutes – 12/3/08 Public Hearing

Ms. Gibson further stated that the rest of the counties do not require a locked door because it is a fire safety hazard, that children must be able to exit the building without the help of an adult. The License Board requires a lock “inaccessible to children” locking the children in.

Ms. Gibson requests that providers be allowed to supervise their own children as a parent not a provider. Providers would like to, as an example, be able to allow their own children to leave the premises to play with other children and to leave their 12 year old home while taking the other children on a field trip.

Discussion:

Responding to a question from Lourdes Benedict, Lynn Gibson responded that if law enforcement allows a child to stay home alone and if the provider is comfortable with it then it should be acceptable to the License Board.

Ms. Doenges asked how providers would handle complaints from neighbors about children from the licensed home seen walking the street.

June Moody responded that most neighbors know the children from the neighborhood.

Ms. Gibson suggested the licensing specialist call the provider to verify the complaint.

In response to a question by Lourdes Benedict, Ms. Gibson responded that during a fire inspection she was told there should not be locks on the doors inaccessible to children, that children must be able to get out of the home on their own. That centers have a fire door that exits to a fenced area that's locked.

Ms. Benedict responded that she receives reports on every child that dies in Pinellas County and has seen none where a child burned up in a house fire, but has seen many where a child has drowned in a pool.

Direction to Providers:

Carla Doenges requested this topic be tabled and that providers invite her to their next meetings to discuss “inaccessible locks” on doors.

Minutes – 12/3/08 Public Hearing

- Public Comment: Denise Capri, 2010 Rebecca Drive, Clearwater 33764
Declined to comment
- Public Comment: Sharleen Gamble, 15348 Westminister Avenue,
Clearwater 33760
I.C. Supervision
Ms. Gamble stated that she will not be able to continue with her family day care home license if she will be required to supervise her own 11 and 7 year old children the same way she supervises her day care children.
- Discussion: In response to a question by Terri Hajian, and a response from someone in the audience, Kathy Krause responded that we must comply with Florida Laws, but that those laws do not state a specific age at which a child can stay home alone, that it depends on the abilities and maturity of the child. Donna Huard responded that provider's children over the age of 5 do not currently count in the capacity of the home nor are they supervised like the day care children and that the provider's sick child can be in the home with the day care children.
- Board Direction: Lourdes Benedict requested that staff call the state to verify how the state monitors for supervision.
- Public Comment: June Moody, 7224 118th Terrace North, Largo, FL 33773
I.C. Supervision
Ms. Moody reiterated the same concerns voiced by the other providers regarding the supervision of her own 11 year old, that her 11 year old enjoys the freedom of being in and around the home separate from the day care children.
- Motion to Adjourn: A motion was made by Donna Huard and seconded to adjourn the Public Hearing at 7:15 p.m. Motion unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Judi Vitucci, Secretary