

Center FAQ

These are questions that we have received on our "Contact Us" e-mail. If you have a question, it is quite likely that someone else has the same one, so please don't hesitate to ask us. We will update this page regularly in order to share the information. If you have a question, please feel free to hit the "Contact Us" button on the website and it will be answered quickly and then added to this area on the following update.

Thanks, and as always, please feel free to e-mail or call us anytime with any questions or concerns you may have!

Note: Answers were correct in the timeframe they were posed. Information and regulation are subject to change, so please check back or call for updates. We will attempt to take outdated information off of this FAQ section on a timely basis.

Please click on one of the sections below to pull up FAQs on that topic.

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Questions on Becoming Licensed:

Question:

My center wants to submit an application because we want to add 2 year olds to our program. Is there somewhere on your website that I can print the application to send in with my \$25? I talked with my licensing rep and she said I needed to send both of these in, but I cannot find this application.

Answer:

We do not have applications on line due to the statutory requirements that limit the time the application remains valid. Please call our offices at (727) 507-4857 to have one mailed to you.

Question:

I currently own a private gymnastics & swimming school for children. I am interested in possibly expanding the business to offer a preschool. I have looked online and notice that Pinellas County doesn't follow the same policies as the State of Florida. I would appreciate it if you could guide me and let me know what the FIRST step is that I should look into. I realize it will require a license and/or accreditation as well as many other things. I'm not sure where to find the requirements for staff, building, etc.

Answer:

Information is available on our website, www.pclb.org under "Procedures for Opening a Children's Center". Please read the information, and download the Regulations Governing Pinellas County Children's Centers. We will be pleased to work with you to open a preschool, once you have met the requirements. First, you must have someone with an active Director Credential from the state of Florida. Information regarding how to obtain that is available at www.myflorida.com/childcare/training. Please contact us again when you feel that you are ready for a preliminary site plan review and/or if you have any further questions. We look forward to working with you.

Question:

We have one small question. How do we go about getting the Religious Exemption from Licensure? Is there a separate licensing board for this? We are looking at what all is involved in this. How do you work with child care facilities that are religiously oriented?

Answer:

In order to obtain a Religious Exemption from Licensure, according to page 6 of Licensing Regulations Governing Pinellas County Children's Centers "you have to be a children's center that is an integral part of a church or parochial school conducting regularly scheduled classes, courses of study or educational programs accredited by or a member of an organization which publishes and requires compliance with its minimum standards for health safety and sanitation; provided however, that such a center shall meet the minimum requirements of the Pinellas County License Board, the applicable local governing body as to health, safety and sanitation, and the screening requirements as published in Licensing Regulations Governing Pinellas County Children's Centers, and the center submits proof of membership in an organization which publishes and requires compliance with its standards for health, safety and sanitation."

In Pinellas County, Religious Exempt centers receive two monitoring inspection per year. The only things that are not required are someone with a Director Credential, and staff with Staff Credentials. I understand that you are currently a family child care home. If you would like to apply to become a Religious Exempt Children's Center, we can send you the requisite paperwork. The state recognizes only certain accrediting agencies as viable in this area. That list is available on the DCF website.

Question:

If someone is opening a daycare facility in Pinellas County, does the owner(s) have to have an administrator license or a permit issued by the county or state or is the facility itself being licensed?

Answer:

The facility is licensed, but in the name of the owner. The owner can be an individual or a corporation. Someone, whether it is the owner, or someone that they hire, must have an active Director Credential, which is issued by the state.

Question:

What are the requirements regarding "Mom's Morning Out" programs. Do they have to be licensed?

Answer:

"Mom's Morning Out" programs do not have to be licensed if they provide irregular care for less than 4 hours per week. If there is advanced sign up and an expectation of regular care, they would need to be licensed.

Question:

I am currently a stay at home mother and am looking into starting up a daycare center (outside of the home). I was an elementary school teacher (grades 2 & 3) for the past 5 years until our school was shut down last year and I had my first child. I am looking for any information or someone to contact in regards to starting up a daycare and how I would go about this process. I have been looking over the DCF website and found some useful information, but was wondering if this includes all of the information that I need to begin this process. I was having trouble finding information about the type of building (house versus strip mall type setting). We have been looking at leasing properties and have found many with decent square footage, but no outdoor play spaces or even room to put one and we were wondering what the regulations were in regard to outdoor play areas, if one is required if we found adequate space indoors etc. Your help with any information or a contact to set me in the right direction to get this process started would be greatly appreciated. Thank you for your time.

Answer:

Thank you for your inquiry. We will be pleased to assist you in opening a children's center in Pinellas County. In answer to your questions:

1. Please visit our website and visit the Children's Center section. There is a place to download "Procedures for Opening a Children's Center." This packet includes all of the information you will need to begin the process.
2. All children's centers must have outdoor play space. The only exceptions are indoor recreation facilities, which can only care for children for up to 4 hours a day and which must have 3000 usable square indoor floor space for gross motor activities, or an urban center that shows proof from their municipality that there is not availability to have outdoor space. These centers also

need to provide indoor space to allow for gross motor activities. When you are seriously considering a specific space you should contact us at 507-4857 and, based on the location, a licensing specialist will work with you to do a preliminary site inspection to see if all requirements can be met. You will also need approved building, electric, and fire department inspection prior to us being able to give you a license.

3. Finally, every children's center in the state of Florida must have a director with an active Director Credential. The DCF website will give you information on how to obtain one, if you do not already have it. Please let us know if we can provide any further information.

Questions on Background Screening:

Question:

I have a general question regarding the PCLB Licensing Standards. I know it is a requirement for us to conduct a Level 2 Background Screening on all new hires and renewals and on all current employees every 5 years. Are consultants or contractors who are in continuous and constant contact with the children and families required to undergo a Level 2 Background Screening as well?

Answer:

Yes. The new background screening requirements state that anyone who is not a volunteer, volunteering less than 10 hours per month, parents of children, or students who observe for coursework on an intermittent basis must be level 2 screened.

Question:

I have heard a few providers make the statement that they are being told that at their 5 year screening they have to go out and get the Live Scan fingerprinting done. Once the fingerprints are on file there should be no need to redo them. The live scan should be only for NEW providers, NEW subs and NEW employees ... or children that turn 18 in the home.

Can you please verify that I am correct or tell me the reason that a person who has fingerprints on file and has not left their job for more then the required time frame allowed would have to do this? I do know that there is an added cost to the FBI background checks.

Answer:

If you visit the DCF background clearance website at www.dcf.state.fl.us/admin/backgroundscreening you will see that the state law has changed as of August 1, 2010. Now, anyone who has a five year screening due must be fingerprinted by Live Scan, rather than the old fingerprint cards. The reason for the re-screening every five years is to make sure that the person has not been arrested after the initial screening.

The FDLE background form (Attachment 3 on our website) is now only for those between 12 and 18 years of age. Once they turn 18, they will need to be fingerprinted, etc. This information was provided on a PCLB mailing dated July 12, 2010. There are Live Scan locations on our website under fingerprinting, and also on the DCF background screening website. Each Live Scan vendor sets their own fees.

Question:

1. Since we have started Live Scan we no longer are receiving the FDLE transaction lists. We are only receiving a Clearance Letter from the DCF. Is this correct?
2. Is a Local criminal history check still required since we are receiving clearance Letters from The Florida Department of Children and Families much sooner than before Live Scan was being used?

If yes, if we have the Clearance Letter can we start an employee *before* the Local results are received?

Answer:

1. FDLE and FBI results now go through DCF, generating one clearance letter that states at the top "FINAL". You still must do the local background check, as it states in the middle of that clearance letter that this does not include local law enforcement background screenings.
2. No, you may not start an employee until the local, FDLE/FBI clearance, Affidavit of Good Moral Character is signed, and the 2 year employment history is completed. That is what comprises a full Level 2 background screening clearance.

Question:

If we wanted to hire a Community Relations Director, whose primary function is off-site, and during the time while their background screening is in process they worked from home and had no on-site time, is that something that would be acceptable?

Answer:

Employees who work off-site do not need to have screening completed prior to employment. Once their screenings are completed and they are cleared, they can work on-site.

Question:

I am the Provider Liaison for West Central Early Steps. I would like clarification on the following two questions to inform our service providers who serve children in the Early Steps Program within a day care setting:

1. Are therapists (speech, occupational and physical) and Infant Toddler Developmental Specialists (early childhood education teachers) considered Child Enrichment Service Providers?
2. If so and based on page 16 of the Children's Center Licensing Regulations 5/2010, a Child Enrichment Service Provider must meet the Level 2 FBI screening requirements to be able to take a child out of the classroom (not be under the direct and constant supervision of child care personnel). Now my question is, if a Child Enrichment Service Provider does not have documentation of meeting the screening requirements, can he (she) work with that child within the classroom under the direct and constant supervision of child care personnel?

Answer:

Therapists are not considered Child Enrichment Providers. They need to be Level 2 screened to be alone with a child. They can remain in the classroom with the child, as long as they are under the direct and constant supervision who meets the personnel requirements in 402.302 (3). In, other words, a child care person who has been Level 2 screened.

Questions on Fines:

Question:

We received a fine and need to know if we will receive a bill for this fine.

Answer:

No bill is sent. The Rule of Procedure for Hearing that are given with the fine outline the procedure. The Rule of Procedure for Hearing can also be found on our website home page under Quick Links on the right hand side.

The address to remit the payment to is:

Child Care Licensing Program
Florida Department of Health
4175 East Bay Drive, Suite 350
Clearwater, FL 33754

Questions on Supervision Issues:

Questions on Discipline:

Questions on Reporting Child Abuse/Neglect:

Question:

I enrolled my son in a summer camp Friday the 11th of June. The first day he was bullied by a boy older than him. They don't have enough counselors. I paid them to watch my kid and for my kid to be safe. Now I have to pull my kid out of this camp and the offenders get to stay. Florida is supposed to protect kids from bullies. This place needs to be monitored and forced to put measures into place if they are going to allow young kids to be with older kids.

Answer:

By definition, Summer Camps for school age children do not require licensure by our agency. However, we want to give you information about how you can find a licensed school age summer program and also what recourse you have towards the camp. Someone from our agency will be contacting you shortly.

Follow up: If you suspect that children are being abused, or neglected through inadequate supervision, please notify the Florida Abuse Hotline at 800-96-ABUSE (2-2873).

Questions on Child Records/All Other Forms:

Question:

Can we order the accident and incident report forms? We do not have any on file and would like some just in case. I believe they are carbon copy?

Answer:

We do not have carbon copy accident/incident report forms. We do have a sample accident/incident form on our website, www.pclb.org. Perhaps an office supply or printing business could assist you in turning it into a carbon copy form.

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Question:

If a child does not have a specific doctor and goes to a walk-in clinic, what address do you use?

Answer:

The name, address and phone number for the walk-in clinic.

Question:

If you have a 2 year old with a shot record that expires in 2013 or later, can the provider accept it?

Answer:

If the doctor says that the expiration date is 2013, then we must accept it.

Question:

Is the Emergency Release Form the only child form that needs to be notarized?

Answer:

Yes

Question:

If the provider gets a religious exempt form, do they still need a physical form?

Answer:

If a parent's religion prohibits traditional medical care and assistance, the parent should provide the center with a notarized letter stating that their child will not be seen by a doctor.

Question:

Can you attach another piece of paper to the Enrollment Form when a parent changes their information several times?

Answer:

No, have them fill out a new form with the updated information and date the new form.

Question:

Are accident/incident forms to be retained by the center for one year?

Answer:

Yes.

Question:

Are centers required to document when a child comes in with a bruise?

Answer:

Yes, they should always document observed injuries on a child.

Questions on Fire Safety:

Question:

Do children have to be present to do a fire drill?

Answer:

Yes. The children need to know that when the fire alarm is sounded that they will need to follow instructions and go outside.

Questions on Indoor Play Space:

Questions on Outdoor Play Space:

Question:

Is there a certain amount of mulch that a playground must have?

Answer:

Regulations say "resilient surface". We do not measure for depth, but it seems that most agencies suggest 6 to 9 inches of depth, especially in "fall areas" such as under swing sets and teeter totters, under monkey bars and other climbing apparatuses, and in other areas where children might be expected to fall down. Some centers utilize rubber mats in fall areas on playgrounds. Please feel free to refer to the National Playground Safety Handbook for best practice for whatever type of ground covering that you have on your playground. There is a link to their handbook on our home page to the bottom right under "Quick Links".

Questions on Safety/Health/Sanitation:

Question:

Is there a specific type of lock that must be used to store toxics?

Answer:

No, the children's center regulations states that toxic/hazards....shall be stored in a locked container or a locked area that is inaccessible to children. It does not state anywhere that the lock must be disengaged with a key. A keyed lock is practical when it is in reach of children. The key can be stored in a place out of a child's access, i.e. on a hook that is high and out of their reach. A hook and eye, slide bolt or "child proof lock" is acceptable when out of their reach, as they could not easily disengage the lock. When purchasing locks consider whether a child can easily disengage a lock. If they can, then that would not be an acceptable lock. However, if the locked area is not in their normal reach, and would take some effort for them to get to it, then it would not be a violation. Please contact your licensing specialist if you need further direction.

Questions on Employees/Volunteers:

Question:

This was taken from your web site on 9/13/10. Is this correct? If not, please let me know what is required for #6. Volunteer as shown below.

6. VOLUNTEER - A person who provides services at a children's center with no promise of compensation. A volunteer not under direct and constant supervision, and/or is alone with children, and/or used in adult/child ratio, must meet all the requirements of child care staff. **For a volunteer who works less than 40-hours a month, and who is under direct and constant supervision, no documentation is required in the children's center personnel file.**
- For a volunteer who works 40 hours or more a month, who is under direct and constant supervision, the following is required in the children's centers personnel file:
- Employment Application
 - Acknowledgment Form
 - Attestation of Good Moral Character
 - Employment History Check
 - Local Criminal Records Check
 - Five Year Local Criminal Records Check
 - Florida Department of Law Enforcement documentation
 - 40 Hour/10-Hour Training documentation if directly working with children

- 5 Clock-Hours or .5 CEU Early Literacy training
- Credentialing Requirement if person is meeting this requirement
- Approved infant training certificate if working with infants
- First Aid Certificate if person is meeting this requirement
- Infant and Child CPR if person is meeting this requirement
- Driver's license and driver's physical exam if person meets this requirement
- See (3) below

Answer:

We sent a letter was sent to all Licensed Child Care Centers on July 12, 2010, letting them know that effective August 1, 2010, the volunteer threshold had been changed from 40 hours per month to 10 hours per month. The new Volunteer Affidavit, posted on our website under center forms, Personnel, uses the 10 hour time frame. In the Regulations Governing Children's Centers dated May, 2010, which is available on our website, on page 35, f. it states "Prior to beginning volunteering in a children's center, a Volunteer Affidavit, which is incorporated by reference, and may be obtained from the www.pclb.org website must be completed and on file at the children's center for the volunteer". The only change is that it is now required at 10 hours per month, rather than at 40 hours per month. That change will be incorporated into our published regulations the next time they are changed. We are waiting for some newly promulgated regulations from the state to be put into place, and then new regulations will be available.

Question:

Per the current regulations, volunteers that are on-site more than 10 hours per month must have a level 2 screening, but how would that affect community service people who need to complete a certain amount of hours? Is the regulation only for those volunteers that have direct contact with children, or can office personnel be exempted?

Answer:

According to the new background screening requirements anyone present while children are in care, besides volunteers of less than 10 hours per month, children's parents, and students on-site intermittently for coursework, need complete Level 2 screening results before they can be on site. Office personnel cannot be exempted if the office is on the premises. Some facilities actually have offices at a different address. When you refer to community service, it is important to note that if the hours are required due to an arrest of some kind, you will need to have the person complete the Affidavit of Good Moral Character and the screening to ensure that they are not disqualified.

Questions on CPR/First Aid Certification:

Question:

Do you accept the online First Aid and CPR programs?

Answer:

We accept online First Aid Courses. Currently, we accept online CPR courses as long as there is an in person classroom, instructor based assessment required to complete the course. The First Aid and CPR courses have to include infants and children. We do not know of an online CPR course with the in person assessment in our area as this is a newly accepted procedure.

Questions on Transportation:

Questions on Food Nutrition:

Question:

Is there an amount of fluid an infant must have?

Answer:

This is not regulated by the Pinellas County Licensing Board or the State of Florida. Each child has their own needs, and the parent should share their expectations about feeding for their infant.

Question:

My daughter is 10 months old and attends a child care center in Dunedin, FL. They told us that they were inspected yesterday and that the inspector told them that they are no longer allowed to warm bottles with a liner, such as the Playtex bottles. I would like to know if this is correct. If so why?

Answer:

It is not against Child Care Regulations to warm a bottle with a liner. However, some bottles with liners state on the bottle that they should not be heated. A center refusing to heat a bottle with a liner could be a business practice or personal preference, or because they fear that the plastic liner will melt in the heating process.

Questions on Training:

Question:

One of our teachers would like to take testing that is available enabling her to opt out of coursework. How does she find out about the process?

Answer:

She can go online to www.myflorida.com/childcare and look under training. There is a competency test scheduling section that will allow her to schedule her tests.

Question:

If you hire someone before June 1st is it true that they must complete 10 hours of training before July 31st. Even if hired May 31st? IT IS NO LONGER PRORATED!

Answer:

On page 38 of our regulations it says under 15, i., "All child care personnel continuously employed or hired between July 1 and June 1 of the state's fiscal year must complete the annual in-service training requirement. This includes any changes in employment from one program to another". That is from Ch. 65C-22.003. Therefore, someone hired before June 1st does need the 10 hours of in-service training. The only exception to this would be if they are brand new to childcare, and have 90 days to start their training. If they have been in childcare previously, they do need to complete the 10 hours.

Questions on Medications:

Question:

Medication must be stored in a locked area or must be inaccessible and out of a child's reach. What should you do if a medication is required for emergencies and needs to be with a child when they are outside or away from the place that the medication is normally stored?

Answer:

There are various ways that medication can be kept inaccessible to children when it needs to be in a place that is not locked or out of their reach. Staff can transport medication in a fanny pack, back pack or satchel. They can put it in a zip lock bag, and clip it to their clipboard. The key is to always keep that bag/clipboard on their person. Setting it down on a bench or on the floor makes it now accessible to children. If a licensing specialist observes a medication that is not locked or stored inaccessibly and out of a child's reach it will be a violation.

Question:

What do you do if staff is not sure how to administer an inhaler or Epi-pen?

Answer:

You must ensure that at least one person on site is trained in using an inhaler and an Epi pin, if you have children who might require these medications. We would suggest designating 1 or 2 trained people to administer medications.

Question:

Can you keep an Epi-pen in a classroom?

Answer:

Yes, however, it and all other medications need to be inaccessible to children.

Question:

Can school-aged children carry medication with them in case they get bit by ants or something they are allergic to?

Answer:

No, the medication must be handled by staff.

Question:

Can you call a parent to get authorization to give a child Benadryl?

Answer:

If it is not an emergency situation where medical personnel has stated that you should give the medication, then a call is not acceptable for permission to administer medications. The permission must be in writing from the parent.

Question:

Do you need a prescription to use diaper cream or bug spray?

Answer:

If the diaper cream is a prescription product you need to have the prescription, otherwise only a permission form signed by the parent is necessary. If you need to use an insecticide of any kind, a signed permission form signed by the parents is necessary and you must follow the instructions on the product and follow them carefully.

Questions on Napping/Cribs:

Questions on Animals:

Question:

What are the regulations regarding dogs? My baby sitter is WONDERFUL, but I just found out she has a large dog. I knew she had a dog but I thought it was in a fenced in area. I saw it for the first time and am not happy with the breed. I am not comfortable with it and wanted to know if I can find somewhere without animals or if that is not something I can expect from a home daycare.

Realizing there might not be common sense breed regulations got me thinking... Are they allowed to have guns in the house? I would not want my child in a house with guns, but assumed anyone licensed would not have them. I never thought to ask. There are many things I did not ask because I assumed licensed daycares would be extremely safe.

Answer:

Please go to our webpage at http://www.pinellashealth.org/PCLB/PDFfiles/F-REGULATION_MANUAL_KEYED_MAY_2010.pdf

You can find all the regulations specifically regarding these and other issues. However, I can generalize for you here as well.

Child cares homes are allowed to have dogs and other pets, however, the parents have to be notified in writing that they are on the property. The animals must be current on their shots. They cannot have any animal banned by local codes or number of animals that exceeds

local zoning. That is determined by their city. Any dog or animal that has been labeled as dangerous by animal control cannot be on the property.

Guns are also allowed in child care homes. However, they have to be inaccessible to children, and the ammunition has to be stored separately and also inaccessible. If the guns are in sight, for example in a gun cabinet, they must be locked.

Some centers do have animals. They would also need to provide written notice to parents of any animals that are on the premises, and the animals would also need to be up to date on shots and not labeled as dangerous. Guns are never allowed in child care centers, unless a police officer or someone else required to carry one is on the premises picking up a child or responding for their job.

Please also note that all centers and homes that are licensed as is required by law in Pinellas County, have files that are kept in our office and the public is always welcome to make an appointment to see a file. Their inspections are also available for viewing on our website.

Questions on Advertising:

Questions on Miscellaneous:

Question:

I am trying to find out information about licensed centers in my area of Clearwater. We are looking for someone to take care of my granddaughter a few hours a day. Is there such a list available and if so, please direct me on how to find the information.

Answer:

If you go to www.pclb.org you can find providers and read their previous inspections on line. You can also just connect to the following link: <https://dcfsanswrite.state.fl.us/pinellaspublic/>

You can enter the zip code for the area you are looking for. Homes and centers are listed on this site. If you have any further questions, please let us know.

You can also look at listings on Coordinated Child Care's web site located at www.childcarepinellas.org and look at locating child care and fine Child Care Resource and Referral for free referral services.

Question:

If the mother has legal custody can dad pick the child up if mom has a letter stating she does not want dad to pick up?

Answer:

The non custodial parent can only pick up a child whose custodial parent has requested that he/she not pick up the child if he/she can produce current court documentation that it is approved by a Judge.

Question:

Under what link on your website can I find the MSDS form for VPK/ELC/CCC?

Answer:

MSDS forms are provided by the manufacturer of the products. You can call the number on the bottle, and they can also usually be found on the manufacturer's website.