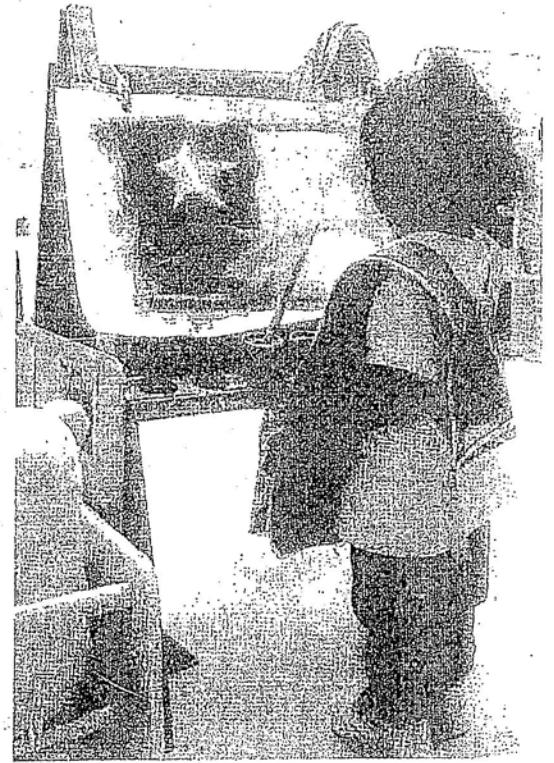


A Parent's Guide to Day Care

Dear Parent:

When you choose licensed day care, you and your family join your child in new experiences and relationships. You, the day-care director, child-care staff, and other people in the day-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.

Minimum standards require your day-care provider to give you a copy of this pamphlet. You need to sign the receipt form to verify that you have received it and discussed the material with facility staff.



What is day-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 day-care centers, private kindergartens and nursery schools, some unaccredited private schools, group day-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 day-care facility is responsible for meeting minimum standards. Many day-care programs exceed these requirements. Licensing does not regulate day-care fees, collection policies, or the kind of learning program your day-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.

It is important for you to know

• When you visit a day-care facility, ask to see the license. The license means that the day-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.

• Minimum standards prohibit persons who have been convicted of certain crimes from having contact with children in care.

• Compliance with minimum standards does not guarantee high quality child care. They are called "minimum standards" because no one is allowed to operate below these standards.

A copy of the minimum standards is available for you to review at your day-care facility. You can also request a copy of these standards from your local day-care licensing office. A list of these offices may be found on the PRS website: www.tdprs.state.tx.us or by calling the Child Care Information Line at 1-800-862-5252.

Establish a good relationship with the day-care facility

• Spend time at the day-care facility before you enroll your child. Ask questions about the program and observe the activities. Make sure the day-care facility has all the information needed about your child and family to provide good care.

• Work with the staff of the day-care facility you choose. Parent involvement is an important part of a successful experience with day care.

• Read all the material the day-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 day-care provider sends home.

- Ⓞ 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 day-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 day-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. 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 day care sometimes remove their child from care, but don't report the problem. This leaves other children in danger. State law requires everyone, including day-care providers, to report suspected child abuse or neglect immediately.

When people make a report of suspected child abuse in good faith, they are immune from any liability. When the department investigates a complaint, the identity of the complainant is not revealed.

For information about local licensing offices and additional parent guides, look on the Protective and Regulatory Services website at: www.tdprs.state.tx.us. The Child Care Information line at 1-800-862-5252 also has information about local licensing offices.



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