

~ Family Child Care Homes ~

An Important Option for Families

What is Family Child Care?

Family child care providers offer care for children in the provider's home. Most people who provide this type of care are required to be licensed in California by the California Department of Social Services/Community Care Licensing either as a:

- **“small” family child care home** for up to six children (plus optional two school-age under certain conditions) or
- **“large” family child care home** for up to 12 children (plus optional two school-age) with an assistant.
Their own children under 10 years of age are included.

Why do Parents Choose Family Child Care Providers?

Parents choose family child care for several reasons, including:

- 1) They prefer their children to spend their days in a home-like environment and a smaller group setting (compared to a child care center).
- 2) They prefer to relate to a single caregiver, and possibly an assistant who may be a family member. Children may have a consistent caregiver from infancy through school-age.
- 3) They may want all their children to be cared for together, for convenience and so that siblings can interact during the day. Family child care homes can care for children from birth to 12 years of age together.
- 4) Sometimes they choose family child care because they find it closer to home, less expensive or more flexible. Some home providers offer care beyond the typical weekday 7:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m. schedule, to serve families with evening, night or weekend work hours.

Many families find that their family child care provider and her family become like extended family over the years.

What licensing regulations must be met by family child care providers?

California has minimum health and safety standards for providers and their homes which are inspected prior to licensure. Family child care providers and any person 18 year or older living in the residence are required to have a criminal records check and child abuse and neglect clearance. At least 15 hours of health training including infant/child first aid and CPR are required. Many providers have taken college coursework or other training in child development and early education, though not required. Some have experience and education to work in

child care centers/preschools but have chosen to provide family child care so they can be at home with their own children and/or have their own small business.

More information about licensing requirements can be found on the website of California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing division: <http://cclld.ca.gov/PG411.htm>

Also, summaries of Regulation Highlights for both Family Child Care Homes and Child Care Centers are at: <http://cclld.ca.gov/PG547.htm>.

Which home care providers are not required to be licensed?

Caregivers are exempt from licensing if:

- they are related to the children by blood or marriage
- they care for children from only one family other than their own/relatives'
- they care for a child in the child's home

How do I find names of family child care home providers?

The Child Care Coordinating Council (4Cs) is the child care resource and referral (R&R) agency for San Mateo County, providing free referrals to hundreds of licensed homes as well as child care centers/preschools in the county. You may request referrals for any city or neighborhood. Contact **(650) 655-6777** or www.sanmateo4Cs.org.

What can I do to ensure that my child and our family have a positive and safe experience using family child care?

- 1) Learn how to select quality child care—what to look for and questions to ask.
- 2) After asking basic questions by phone, visit several homes to observe the interactions and physical environment.
- 3) Check the provider's licensing history by calling the Licensing District Office: **(650) 266-8843**. Ask the provider for parent references.
- 4) Ask questions and discuss your concerns with the provider(s) during your search and after starting in care. If you have serious concerns about the facility to which the provider is not responsive, call the Licensing Office.
- 5) Begin early and maintain a mutually respectful, business relationship with the provider, including having a contract describing services, vacation, sick child, late pick-up, payment and other policies.
- 6) Continue to monitor your care arrangement by taking time to observe and ask questions when you drop off or pick up your child, or request to speak to the provider at a more convenient time. Feel free to stop by unannounced during the day to visit.

