**Professional Family Child Care**

**Alliance of Georgia**

***Dedicate ~ Educate ~ Appreciate***

 **www.pfccag.org ~ PFCCA Phone:** 404-421-3985

**High Standards for Health, Safety, Child Development and Professionalism:**

**GA Family Child Care Learning Home Licensing Regulations:**

**\*PURPOSE:** To inform city and county officials that Bright from the Start Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) licensing procedures concerning Family Child Care Learning Homes (FCCLH) are comprehensive and adequately address concerns regarding health, fire safety, accident prevention, emergency preparedness, and child protection.

**Licensing Standards and Process.**

DECAL has the legal responsibility to license Family Child Care Learning Homes (FCCLH)s. DECAL established over two hundred required standards addressing all elements of FCCLH operation. DECAL inspects homes prior to issuing a license. After receiving a license, homes receive at least two visits per year. One visit is an annual “licensing study” where all rules are evaluated, and one or more visits are “monitoring visits” which evaluate only the core rules affecting health, safety and follow-ups to previously cited rules. An extract of key standards includes:

**Education and In-service Requirements**. All licensed providers are required to have a credential/degree ranging from a minimum of a Child Development Associate Credential (CDA), or Technical Certificate of Credit (TCC) in Early Childhood Education (or equivalent), up to a master’s degree in Early Childhood Education. A 2 year waiver is available for those that do not meet the current educational requirement. In addition, prior to opening, the provider must attend a FCCLH Licensing Orientation Meeting (FCCLH LOM), take CPR/First Aid training and attend 10 hours of training addressing work force knowledge competencies. These competencies include Early Learning Standards, Communication, Professional & Leadership Development, Business Management, and Advocacy for Parents, Children, Staff. After opening, the provider, must take 10 hours of additional training on these competencies every year.

**Compliance with Local Requirements.** Prior to opening their FCCLHs, providers must furnish proof to DECAL they comply with county/city requirements related to zoning, business permits, source of water supply, as well as landlord permission (if applicable), Fire Marshall Inspection (if required), and an “Affidavit Authorizing Lawful Presence.”

**Criminal Background Checks.** The provider and family members 17 years or older living in the home, or having regular contact with the children, must complete a comprehensive criminal background check including FBI fingerprint, National Crime Information Center’s National Sex Offender Registry; Georgia Child Abuse Registry, and Georgia Sex Offender Registry. If an individual lived in another state within the previous five years, that states registries must be checked also.

**Health, Safety, and Nutrition.** The home must have a first aid kit, (required supplies listed on DECAL website), smoke detectors, fire extinguisher, operable telephone, safety gates (if needed to protect the children from steps or unused room), outlet covers, and covered and lined trashcans. There are requirements concerning equipment and process for changing diapers, handwashing, toilet sanitation, fire drills and other emergency drills, pet vaccination and supervision, and firearm safety. Toys and equipment are free from hazardous conditions and secured. The home must be kept free of fire hazards and the providers has training and a plan to handle fire and weather emergencies. Meals and snacks must be nutritious, well balanced, and varied.

**Supervision and Child Managemen**t. Providers are required to furnish continuous watchful supervision at all times. Discipline policies prohibit actions detrimental to the child’s physical or mental health.

**Children’s Activities.** The provider must offer a variety of daily activities appropriate for the children’s chronological ages and developmental needs. Required activities include: indoor/outdoor play, balance of quiet, active, free choice and child/caregiver-directed activities; small/large group/large muscle/small muscle, language, arts and crafts, dramatic play, music, and nature and science. Children must spend some time each day outdoors when health and weather permit. Providers are encouraged to develop lesson plans based on the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS) - a set of high-quality, research-based early learning standards for children birth to age five.

**Outdoor Play Area.** Outside play areas are protected from traffic or other hazards by fencing or other protective barriers at least four feet in height. Equipment must be secured and the play area must have 3” mulch for equipment 3ft-5ft, or 6” of mulch for equipment 5ft or over (or another resilient surface throughout).

**BOTTOM LINE**. DECAL FCCLH standards are comprehensive and consistent statewide. Zoning ordinances should treat FCCLHs as an ordinary use of a residence. Ordinances which supersede licensing requirements make it costly and difficult to open or maintain a FCCLH which limits access to much needed child care services and harms the interests of children and working parents.

\*This document was written by PFCCAG in support of the Family Child Care Marathon (FCCM) project, a coalition of organizations including CD-Action, 9to5 National Association of Working Women, Professional Family Child Care Alliance of Georgia (PFCCA), Quality Care for Children (QCC) and United Way of Greater Atlanta.

The goal of FCCM is to smooth and shorten the race to provide high quality family child care at the neighborhood level by addressing local government policies creating cost, time, and regulatory roadblocks. “It should not be a marathon uphill all the way.”