

## I. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

General information about North Carolina's licensing requirements for family child care homes is given in this chapter. For information about the requirements for homes to participate in the Subsidized Child Care (SCC) Program, refer to [Chapter 16: Approval and Enrollment Procedures for Licensed Facilities](#).

## II. STAR RATED LICENSE SYSTEM

North Carolina's star rated license system reflects the quality of child care programs and allows programs to be recognized for providing higher quality care. Family child care home operators can voluntarily apply for a two through five star rated license when they have been in operation for at least six (6) months. Operators receive a one star license unless they choose to be assessed for a higher level license.

A star rating of two to five stars is based on program standards and staff education. The program standards component includes the environment and level of care a child receives at the home. The staff education component refers to the early childhood educational level and experience of the provider.

Although not a component of the rated license, a child care program must maintain a 75% compliance history.

The Division's website provides information about the star rated license requirements for child care homes.

## III. MANDATE FOR LICENSURE

### A. Determining Need for Licensure

1. Family child care homes must be licensed by the Division of Child Development (DCD) when care is provided on a regular basis of at least once per week for more than four (4) hours per day for more than two (2) children who are not related to the provider.

Acceptable kinship between the child and provider is defined in law as persons related by blood or marriage. Included are step relationships, i.e., stepparent, stepsister, etc., and great relationships, i.e., great grandparent, great aunt, etc.

Licensed family child care homes may provide care to a maximum of eight (8) children, but no more than five (5) may be preschool age, unless all of the children are being cared for in their own home. The

provider's own preschool children are counted in the maximum of five (5) preschool children, but the provider's own school-age children or school-age children who live in the home where care is provided are not counted. A preschool child is defined as any child five (5) years of age or younger, who is not enrolled in and attending a public or private grade school or kindergarten.

2. Licensure is not required when:
  - a. All of the children are related to the provider.
  - b. The provider is caring for less than three (3) children who are not related to her.
  - c. The children who are in their own home are not related to the provider and no more than two children who do not live in the home are in care.

The requirements for homes are found in the publication [North Carolina Child Care Licensing Requirements](#).

## **B. Exemptions from Licensing Requirements**

The following child care arrangements are exempt from licensure:

1. Arrangements made among parents to provide care for their own children to create playgroups for the children or free time for the parents, but not child care while the parents work.
2. Care for children of any age when care is provided for no more than four (4) hours per day.
3. Bible schools operated during school vacation periods.
4. Specialized activities or instruction such as athletics, dance, art, music lessons, horseback riding, gymnastics, or organized clubs for children, such as Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4-H groups, or boys and girls clubs.

## **C. Religious-Sponsored Programs**

Religious-sponsored programs are not required to obtain a license but they must meet most of the licensing requirements. A Notice of Compliance letter is issued by DCD and must be kept on file by the provider. See [Chapter 16: Approval and Enrollment Procedures for Licensed Facilities](#) for more information about religious-sponsored programs.

#### **IV. PROCEDURES FOR LICENSURE**

##### **A. Applying for a License**

Anyone interested in becoming licensed to operate a family child care home should contact the Division of Child Development or one of the child care resource and referral agencies. Those who request information about the licensing requirements are first sent an Application Packet which contains age and education requirements, an operator checklist, application forms, and a printed materials order form.

The Division recommends that potential family child care home providers attend a prelicensing workshop to receive an overview of the family child care home law and rules. The workshop focuses on licensing information, region-specific zoning and sanitation requirements, and detailed information regarding start-up and operation as it relates to budgeting for quality care.

A Regulatory Services Section Licensing Consultant works with the family child care home operator throughout the licensing process. When it is determined that the applicant is in satisfactory compliance with all applicable child care requirements, a one star family child care home license is issued.

The license is not transferable from one provider to another nor can it be moved from one location to another. Failure to notify the Regulatory Services Section Licensing Consultant and the LPA when a licensed home moves to a new location may result in nonpayment until the Licensing Consultant approves the new location.

##### **B. Visits to Family Child Care Homes**

When complaints are received about a family child care home, the investigation will normally include an unannounced visit to the home. Unannounced annual visits will also be made by the Regulatory Services Section Licensing Consultant to all family child care homes to monitor continued compliance with licensing regulations.