

State Licensing of Child Care Centers—What Does It Mean?

States are empowered with the responsibility of regulating child care services. In Pennsylvania, the state regulates child care by issuing a license to each individual service site. Regulated care—whether a family day care home (usually up to 6 children), a group home (up to 11 children), or a child care center (12 or more children)—involves compliance with very specific state regulations. Centers and group homes are inspected annually and may be spot checked more frequently. Home care sites must declare compliance through a registration process in which they are “certified” instead of licensed. Homes may be inspected every three years. Any report of a regulation violation will result in a site inspection. Reports of violations are often anonymous. Centers and group homes are required to post their state license in a location easily seen by parents and visitors. A new license is granted annually. Regulations cover many different topics, including facility safety, size of spaces, number of restrooms, qualifications of staff, materials available, child health requirements, and more. A copy of state regulations can be requested by calling 570-374-2675, the local Department of Public Welfare licensing office in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania.

Unregulated Care vs. Regulated Care

Unregulated care in Pennsylvania is care provided in a home for three or fewer children. It is not regulated by the state Department of Public Welfare (DPW). If your provider has more than three children, the home care provider should be registered (or licensed as a group home or center depending on how many children are in care) and will be monitored by DPW. If the home care site is not registered, it is operating illegally. If parents choose to use unregulated care, then the parent is solely responsible for monitoring the quality and safety of the care provided. Regulated care, as described in paragraph above, involves compliance with state regulations and routine inspections.

The local state DPW licensing office can be reached at 570-374-2675.