



Office of Family Safety Training Bulletin

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We'd love articles from you! Please submit your agency news, information, kudos, and strategies for improving outcomes to be featured in future Bulletins. Thanks!

Supervisor as Mentor : Guiding the Appropriate Determination of Findings Investigations

By John S. Harper
Office of Family Safety

When it comes to making a determination of findings, one of the more common mistakes made by novice investigators is the tendency to get lost in the details and lose sight of the bigger picture. This inability "to see the forest from the trees" is typically manifested in one of two ways – either an over reliance on peripheral details, or correspondingly, the failure to recognize the most essential aspect of the investigation.

In the first instance, supervisory guidance and direction is needed because new investigators are inclined to get "caught up" in the specific details contained in the allegation narrative. While 'attention to detail' is generally very important in our line of work, focusing on the details becomes problematic when due consideration is not first given as to whether the specific incidents investigated actually rise to the level of abuse or neglect defined in statute. You will typically have to remind your new folks on more than one occasion that while every incident described in the allegation narrative may in fact be true and "verifiable," that in and of itself, does not necessarily equate to a verified finding.

For example, a report alleges 'Other Mental Injury' because the parent of a second grader has allowed the child to wear red cowboy boots and shorts to school every day for the past week. The narrative goes on to state that the teacher has expressed concerns to the parent about the child being teased by his classmates because of his unusual attire and it continues despite her best efforts to stop it. The teacher also informed the parent that the child is beginning to act out in the classroom which she believes is a predictable response to the teasing from the other children. She reports she has asked the parent on two separate occasions not to allow the child to wear the boots to school every day but the parent refuses to appreciate or recognize the extent of the problem.

At the school the investigator observes the child wearing the red boots, observes the child getting teased from his classmates, gets a statement from the teacher

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that the child has worn the red boots nearly every day for the past two weeks, and confirms the fact that the teacher has personally spoken with the parent to no avail. Upon interviewing the child's mother she states to the investigator that "learning independence is far more important than being popular" and, "the school will just have to deal with it."

In the above example, it would be very easy for the investigator to focus on the more obvious and verifiable details – red boots to school (check), teasing by classmates (check), school has attempted to intervene (check), and parent refuses to cooperate (check) – while missing the essence of the allegation. Which is, does the parent's action result in any physical, mental, or sexual injury or harm that causes is or likely to cause the child's physical, mental, or emotional health to be significantly impaired? (See 39.01(2) F.S.)

While both the teasing and acting out are certainly concerns, as is the mother's somewhat cavalier attitude, statutory language does not equate questionable or even poor parenting with abusive or neglectful parenting. While the investigator can easily show all the details in the allegation narrative are in fact true, unless he or she gets the necessary corroborative statements from a licensed mental health professional confirming discernable and substantial impairment, or the likeliness of the actions leading to substantial impairment (i.e., threatened harm) the other "verifiable" details are inconsequential to making a verified finding.

The second issue that can be problematic related to the determination of an appropriate finding is that inexperienced investigators often overlook the fact that just one critical detail or piece of evidence can justify a verified finding. While in the previous discussion investigators focused on the easily verifiable details, in this instance they tend to focus on the fact that so many of the details cannot be verified, are shown to be untrue, or are inconsistent. In the vernacular, they get so distracted by all the "red herrings" (false leads or intentional deception) they fail to note the obvious. Most noticeably this happens when either the abuse or

neglects results in a serious injury or death of a child but the perpetrator cannot be identified.

For example, an 11 month-old infant suffers a fracture of the femur which, according to expert medical opinion, could only have occurred as the result of an inflicted injury. All the details surrounding the incident however, are contested. The parents state the child was "healthy" when dropped off at daycare Monday morning. Staff at the center report they noticed the child was having trouble crawling soon after being dropped off. Many

of the other details are sufficiently "cloudy" as well, including which daycare personnel routinely have access to the infant, and the fact that several family members babysat over the preceding weekend.

Many novice investigators would get overwhelmed with the numerous conflicting details and lose sight of the fact that despite the inability to identify the perpetrator the type and severity of the injury alone warrants a verified finding. In this case, one highly credible piece of evidence (expert medical opinion) is enough to support the statutory definition

of harm contained in Florida Statute 39.01(32). The fact that all the other details are inconclusive does not override what we do know – the age of the child, location of the injury, and type of trauma suffered is indicative of a non-accidental, inflicted injury.

So, what can you do to guide your staff in the appropriate determination of findings? For starters, you can ask them to answer two separate but equally important questions. First, does the information and evidence documented in the investigation about the circumstances of the incident meet the necessary threshold for abuse or neglect as defined in statute? And second, despite a myriad of conflicting details, is any one piece of evidence substantive enough to clearly meet the statutory definition for harm? While certainly not an exhaustive list, these two questions should begin to help clarify the decision-making process for your new investigators.

For further information on the supervisor as mentor in guiding the determination of findings, please contact John Harper at (850) 922-3862, or by e-mail at: John_Harper@dcf.state.fl.us

“Does the information and evidence documented in the investigation about the circumstances of the incident meet the necessary threshold for abuse or neglect as defined in statute?”

Keeping Children Out of Foster Care by Supporting Kinship Caregivers

**By Catherine Heath, Office of Family Safety and
Dr. Anne Strozier, Director, Florida Kinship Center**

You get a call in the middle of the night. Your son has been arrested and your grandchildren are either going into foster care or they can come live with you. For you, there is no choice: you tell the investigator to come over. Now you are part of the 2.5 million grandparents and 3.5 million other relatives across the country who are raising their family members' children; but, you never expected that you would have to raise your grandchild or niece or nephew! In fact, because you live in a retirement community, you will now have to move because children under the age of 18 aren't allowed to live there. This is just one example of the many situations that kinship caregivers face when they agree to take custody of children.

Kinship care is defined by the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) as "the full time care, nurturing and protection of children by relatives, members of their tribes or clans, godparents, stepparents, or any adult who has a kinship bond with a child." While the State of Florida does make a distinction between relatives and non-relative caregivers, the Florida Kinship Center at the University of South Florida is committed to serving kinship caregivers, in both formal and informal situations.

Established in 1998, the Florida Kinship Center helps kinship caregivers solve problems with financial and legal assistance, respite, mental health services, and affordable housing. These services are free and can last long after a case is closed by the child welfare system, even if the children are not under supervision. Located at the University of South Florida in Tampa, the Florida Kinship Care Center has 14 staff to help kinship caregivers advocate for and empower themselves and the children in their care.

Kinship care can have the following positive impacts on child welfare services, by:

- Keeping Children Out of Foster Care - Not only does it save money for children to be placed with relatives and non-relatives, studies prove the children do better.
- Reducing the Disproportionate Representation of Minority Children - More minority children are in foster care and STAY longer in foster care. Kinship Care

reduces the number of children in foster homes.

- Keeping Older Children out of Foster Care - Older children are more likely to make connections with teachers, coaches, godparents, and others who can also care for them.
- Keeping Siblings Together – Siblings are much more likely to get to stay together when raised by family members.

While the child welfare system in Florida requires permanency for children, we all know that some kinship caregivers need more support; as the children in their custody develop, the caregivers' need for services may change, long after the case is closed. When we place children in kinship care, we are asking those caregivers to support that child either temporarily or for the long term, and we often do not know what the final decision will be.

In some cases, kinship caregivers just need someone to talk to. Some local areas in Florida provide one-on-one counseling or support group meetings for caregivers to discuss their feelings and provide support (a list of all support groups in Florida can be found on the Florida Kinship Center's website). The Florida Kinship Center also offers the "Warmline" for caregivers to call to get support and learn about resources in their community. Forums such as blogs and other internet based forums, including message boards, are also available and may provide the support that caregivers need.

Kinship caregivers who are provided with resources and support outside of the child welfare system are more likely to access these services after the case is closed, often preventing the child's re-entry into the child welfare system. What an excellent resource for the kinship caregivers of the children on your caseload!

More information about the Florida Kinship Center can be found at www.flkin.org or by telephone (toll-free anywhere in Florida) at 1-800-640-6444, or by e-mail at: kinfo@flkin.org. You may also contact the Center's director, Dr. Anne Strozier, at 813-974-1379 or by e-mail at: strozier@cas.usf.edu.

The QA System Redesign: A CBC Perspective

By Judith Karim, MHS

Chief Operations Officer, Child and Family Connections

Early this year when I was first introduced to the framework for the new state Quality Management plan, I'll admit, I was reluctant. Now that my CBC has completed the first quarter under the new system, I can honestly say that this approach has provided many benefits. I would like to begin by first applauding the efforts of everyone involved and congratulating the CBC's and DCF on creating a truly collaborative effort. We all worked so closely on this project that we sometimes forgot who was with a CBC and who was with DCF. The partnerships that have developed as a result of this endeavor will continue to serve all involved as we move forward and will undoubtedly make future initiatives easier.

The implementation of this model calls for several shifts in prior Quality Management practice. The tool is qualitative in nature and requires staff with child welfare experience to be trained in its use. The new tool allows for a more qualitative view of casework practice. The previous 'document check' style of case reviewing has been replaced with a system that requires the reviewer become familiar with the details of each case. As we worked through each case (averaging about six hours each) there was much conversation about the work being done in the field. Our staff, who had the benefit of having seen the tool through its evolution, admitted having to make a conscious effort in identifying quality case work as opposed to the determination of simply whether or not something was done. This has yielded much information about our system of care and how families and staff utilize providers and protocols. It also gave us the unique opportunity to identify training opportunities that could directly impact, in a short time frame, the quality of the services we provide. In reading through each case, reviewers were able to see areas where local practice or even agency cultures both help and hurt permanency outcomes for children.

We have an excellent relationship with our Regional Quality Management team, so we did not enter the side-by-side with too much anxiety. We had a wide diversity of experiences within the side-by-side group and were able to create teams that complemented each other. We were able to reach consensus on our responses, and only occasionally needed to call on the monitors. Generally, the monitors were asked to interpret the guidelines as opposed to mediate a

difference in the response. This overall agreement, combined with similar strengths and weaknesses as noted in the base review increased our confidence in our interrater reliability. I cannot stress enough the impact the standardized training has had on this. Although the new tool relies strongly on professional judgment, the training staff received stressed the intent and philosophy of the qualitative approach and gave staff a sense of confidence in making these determinations.

Our Regional QM team also completed the in-depth reviews. The biggest lesson for us was the difference between what was found during the file review and what was found during the in-depth. When interviewed, the case managers and providers indicated more efforts on the cases than was documented. As a result, we are looking at developing training opportunities on comprehensive documentation.

The next philosophical shift is in how management uses review scores. I first became aware of the need for this to be addressed after the first round of testing on the new tool. Cases submitted from two separate CBC's both resulted in scores in the 30 percent range. Scores this low were almost unheard of on CWIQA or Core Elements reviews. Even when considering the intensity of the review (eight experienced QA staff with an average of 15 years of child welfare experience – a tough audience) and the higher standard of the tool, the scores still seemed low. I was concerned that scores this low would lead to two things: a lack of confidence in front line staff and a 30-item corrective action plan. Both of which could lead to a misuse of the tool by reviewers to avoid these outcomes.

I was relieved that throughout our review, our scores were higher, although not necessarily high enough to completely quell my fears. I want to encourage both CBC and DCF staff to view and communicate results qualitatively, not quantitatively. For example, our cases scored low on quality home visits and parent engagement. Our message to our front line staff is not "do better on these items so the scores improve" but rather, we are encouraging better documentation through training opportunities and supervisory support. These two initiatives will improve scores in several areas, which will improve the bottom line.

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And finally, the model calls for a shift in how we identify, define and implement improvement. The shift to qualitative reviewing will help identify systemic and practice needs in each system of care. They will be different in each area and therefore, do not lend themselves to leaderboard-style comparisons. This should be avoided not only among CBC's, but within the CBC's in the comparison of case management agencies or individual units. I separated ours out to test my philosophy and found that the bottom line score for each agency differed by only one point. I would like to suggest that management staff consider an "improvement over baseline" philosophy as opposed to a specific line of compliance (generally 85%) where everything under the line is a corrective action. Instead, let's use the results as an opportunity to see where the system is strong and where barriers exist. Our results showed us not that one worker or one agency is better than the others, but that there are obstacles both in our service delivery system and in our system culture that inhibit best practice and delay permanency for children.

The active involvement of front line staff is critical not only to the identification of these factors, but also to the resolution. Ask any case manager why a specific item is scoring low, they will tell you what prohibits them from meeting that standard. Involve them in the improvement process and they will tell you their ideas on how to solve it. Make them part of the solution and they will make it happen.

The new model has pointed Quality Management in a new direction. The ability for the CBC's and DCF to come together to identify and implement solutions has great potential for how we care for children in our system. The focus on solution-oriented improvement strategies will lead to steady improvements to our system as a whole.

For further information about the Child and Family Connections' agency experience with the new QA model, please contact Judith Karim at (561) 357-4813, or by e-mail at: jkarim@cfcpbc.org

SAVE THE DATE!!

Domestic Violence Training for Child Welfare Professionals

The Department's Domestic Violence Program is hosting a series of three Coordinated Community Response training opportunities specifically designed for child welfare professionals working with families experiencing domestic violence. The first training will be held in Sarasota, on November 20, 2008. The site was selected to accommodate child welfare professionals working in the Suncoast Region. The next two events will be held in Ft. Lauderdale in January for the Southeast Region, and Destin in March for the Northwest Region.

This one-day training event will bring together domestic violence advocates and child welfare professionals to openly discuss how a community response can assist those providing services to women and their children who are victims of domestic violence. Olga Trujillo and David Mandel, two national domestic violence and child welfare experts will facilitate each

event. Having both of these exceptional speakers together in one forum is a unique opportunity that you will not want to miss! This training counts as professional development ("in-service") training hours; CEU's will be available for licensed mental health and substance abuse providers. The cost for the training is \$25.00 per person; training details and registration information may be accessed here:

http://4d.cmc-associates.com/Scripts/4Disapi.dII/4DCGI/events/105.html?Action=Conference_Detail&ConfID_W=105

If you require accommodations to participate in this event, please contact Gail Willie at 850-414-8313, or by e-mail at: Gail_Willie@dcf.state.fl.us within 7 days of the event.

"The Department of Children and Families complies with state and federal nondiscrimination laws and policies that prohibit discrimination based on age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion or sex. It is unlawful to retaliate against individuals or groups on the basis of their participation in a complaint of discrimination or on the basis of their opposition to discriminatory practices."

Documenting the Visitation Plan in FSFN

By Linda D. Johns, MSW
Office of Family Safety

Question:

Are we required to do a Visitation Plan and, if so, does it have to be in FSFN? Who is responsible for doing the Visitation Plan?

Answer:

A Visitation Plan is a required attachment to a child's Case Plan which must be approved by the court, and which documents compliance with federal and state requirements in order to ensure and maintain key contacts and connections between children, their families (including separated siblings), and other significant relationships recognized by the court. A Visitation Plan is essential to safety, permanency and well-being and supports timely reunification.

The Visitation Plan will typically be developed as a

part of the Case Plan following case transfer and will, under most circumstances, be developed by the Services Worker. It may be created earlier, however, and can be created by a Child Protective Investigator. The mutual input and collaboration of Child Protective Investigations staff and case management staff is essential to the timely development of a Visitation Plan that ensures safety and effective permanency planning for a child.

If the Visitation Plan is altered or modified by the court, the Case Plan is considered amended. The court must be informed immediately of the need to modify a Visitation Plan if safety or other concerns are identified.

Below is an excerpt from the Safety Planning Guidance document posted on the DCF FSFN website at:
http://fsfn/docs/FSFN_Safety_Planning_Policy.pdf

The Visitation Plan

- The Visitation Plan assures safe and timely contacts between the separated child and his or her family including separated siblings.
- A Visitation Plan, or documentation of visitation planning between children separated from their parents, siblings and certain significant others recognized by the court, is required by both Florida Statutes and Florida Administrative Code.
- The Visitation Plan is a template that can be completed in FSFN, printed, and discussed with and signed by the participants of the Visitation Plan.
- The Visitation Plan is a required attachment to the Case Plan.
- The Visitation Plan must be approved by the court, and becomes a part of the court record. Once approved by the court, the Visitation Plan cannot be altered without court approval. If a need to alter the Visitation Plan arises, the information must be brought to the attention of the court as soon as possible.
- Florida Statutes and Florida Administrative Code address the numbers of required visits for parents and siblings. For example, s. 39.4085 (15), F.S., provides that children separated from their siblings must be provided at least weekly visitation with their siblings unless the court orders otherwise.
- Visitation requirements are established in Florida Administrative Code Chapter 65C-28, in section 28.001 ("Visitation") and Florida Administrative Code Chapter 65C-30 in multiple topic areas that address Case Management, Case Planning and the Judicial Review.
- The Visitation Plan must comply with Florida Statutes and Florida Administrative Code requirements regarding frequency of visits, location of visits, supervision requirements, etc.
- The Judicial Review Social Study Report must address visitation activities during the reporting period and compliance with the court approved Visitation Plan.
- The requirements for child protective investigators and case managers to develop and document Safety Plans became effective May 4, 2006 with the provisions found in current Florida Administrative Code.

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Documenting the Visitation Plan in FSFN

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Below are helpful resources for researching statutory and policy requirements in Florida. Remember, our practice and its subsequent documentation in the Florida Safe Families Network must be consistent with statutory and policy requirements in Florida. There is not a separate “FSFN policy” apart from our Florida Statute and Florida Administrative Code.

For further information on the visitation plan in FSFN, please contact Linda Johns at (850) 414-9982, or by e-mail at: Linda_D_Johns@dcf.state.fl.us

Florida Statutes: <http://www.leg.state.fl.us/statutes/>

Florida Administrative Code: <https://www.flrules.org/Default.asp>

FSFN FAQs and a “How Do I?” Guide may be found on the Florida Safe Families Network at: <http://fsfn/>

Florida Statutes, Administrative Code and additional Florida Safe Families Network resources and information are located at the Center for the Advancement of Child Welfare Practice at (click on the FSFN icon on the home page): <http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/Pages/Default.aspx>

Family Safety Memos

August 2008 Memos

The notifications listed below were submitted from the Office of Family Safety to the Regional Directors during August 2008. These notifications can be found on the Network drive in the PDFS Resource Management subfolder entitled “2008 Memos Sent to RDs_CAs_CBCs_SOs”. Please note that notifications with attachments are divided into folders by the month in which they were submitted.

These notifications can also be found on the DCF Document Repository website, at <http://eww.dcf.state.fl.us/~fsp/newpages/repository/repository.shtml#fshead> under the Office of Family Safety, along with information posted by other offices.

Please note that in addition to the following policy memos, a wealth of other information is also available to everyone in the Knowledge Library of the Center for the Advancement of Child Welfare, located at: <http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/>

August 1 – Operating Procedures Repeal

August 5 – Family Safety Data Reports: Comments Requested by COB 8/29/08

August 6 – HHS OIG Adoption Subsidy Audit: Response Requested by August 18, 2008

August 15 – Child Access and Visitation Grant Data Technical Assistance

August 20 – Mentoring Through Qualitative Discussion: Train-the-Trainer – Response requested by September 1, 2008

August 22 – Supplemental Security Income and Eligibility Under IV-E Foster Care Waiver

August 26 – August 2008 “Family Safety Training Bulletin”

DCF Office of Family Safety Training Bulletin

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This issue, and previous issues of the Family Safety Training Bulletin may be found on the DCF intranet Document Repository at: <http://eww.dcf.state.fl.us/~fsp/newpages/repository/repository.shtml#tb>

and on the internet at: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/publications/>

as well as on the Center for the Advancement of Child Welfare Practice web site at:

<http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/>

Choosing Child Care

When choosing child care, plan as far in advance as possible. Choosing the right child care and finding help with child care expenses can take some time. Call your local Child Care Resource and Referral agency for help. A list of child care resource and referral agencies in Florida by county is included in this packet, or call Child Care Aware at 1-800-424-2246 to be referred to local providers.

You may also want to ask your employer, family members, friends, church, or school for recommendations. Consider all your child care options. After you find a few child care programs that meet your family's budget, schedule, and special needs, call to arrange an appointment to visit the child care centers or family homes you have selected.

At the same time you set up your regular child care, investigate your options for back-up care. Consider which of your relatives, friends or neighbors might be available to help you out on an emergency basis. Talk to them about when it might be okay for you to call on them. It is best to identify more than one back-up arrangement if possible.

An overview of the types of childcare typically available and a checklist of things to look for in quality childcare providers is provided on the following pages. For additional information on childcare standards and licensing requirements, visit www.dcf.state.fl.us/childcare.



Types of Child Care

IN-HOME CARE PROVIDERS In Florida, when one adult cares for one family's children other than their own, there are no state guidelines or inspections.

Relative Care

Parents may choose a relative caregiver because...

- ▶ Their children are comfortable with the relative.
- ▶ Parents trust the relative.
- ▶ Relative caregivers may be more flexible and willing to work around their schedule, especially for parents who work non-traditional hours.

Relative child care may raise unexpected and sensitive issues...

- ▶ **Discipline:** Clearly outline your ideas about discipline with your relative, including rules you want them to use to guide your child.
- ▶ **Daily routines:** Discuss your feelings about television, reading, friends, and chores.
- ▶ **Child safety:** Use a safety checklist to assess the safety of your relative's home and educate relative caregivers on the dangers of shaking babies and children.

Signed agreements that cover when and how payment will be provided and how sick days and vacations will be handled will help eliminate misunderstandings.

Nannies and Au-pairs

Parents may choose these in-home care providers because they believe their children will be safer and more secure in their own home. They believe that if they employ the caregiver to work in their home, they have more control over the kind of care their children will receive.

Some parents find in-home care is a more convenient arrangement for the family and may provide more flexibility. If there are several children involved, they may find that in-home care is not significantly more expensive than other forms of care.

FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS Family child care is regulated care that takes place in a caregiver's home. (Florida law also recognizes large family child care homes with two adults providing care. All large family childcare homes must be licensed.)

The age of children in care often varies, although some caregiver's service only a specific age group, such as infants, toddlers, preschoolers or school-agers.

Parents may choose family child care because they want to keep their children in a home-like environment, they prefer to relate to a single caregiver, or they believe that children are healthier, happier and more secure in smaller groups.

Some parents like having all their children in the same group. Parents may also find family child care is closer to home, less expensive or more flexible than other care options.

Registered Homes Registered Child Care Homes must meet state statute requirements, and must:

- ▶ Register annually
- ▶ Provide proof of substitute care
- ▶ Administer screening/background checks of all adults in household
- ▶ Keep current immunization records of children on file
- ▶ Complete a 30-hour family child care course.

Licensed Homes Licensed Child Care Homes must meet all requirements for registration and must pass an initial state inspection to ensure that all standards required by statute have been met. In addition, they must:

- ▶ Follow health, safety and nutrition guidelines
- ▶ Maintain admissions and record keeping
- ▶ Maintain current certification of a CPR and first aid course
- ▶ Receive an initial inspection prior to receiving a license
- ▶ Comply with two routine inspections per year
- ▶ Allow access to children in care
- ▶ Adhere to all other standards in statute

CHILD CARE CENTERS Parents may choose child care centers because they believe that larger groups, multiple caregivers, and state inspections make programs safer for their children and make the arrangement more dependable; or because they respect the reputation of the child care program or the institution sponsoring the program. Many parents believe that more staff, space, equipment, toys and organized activities provide a better learning environment for their children.

 **No matter which options you are considering for your child, you should always visit a home or center more than once before deciding to place your child there.**

Important features to look for in any child care program include:

- ▶ **Supervision:** Children should be supervised at all times, even when sleeping.
- ▶ **Sanitation:** Caregivers should wash their hands often, especially after diapering and before handling food. Children should also wash hands before eating.
- ▶ **Discipline:** Discipline should be positive, clear, consistent and fair. Florida law prohibits any form of discipline that is severe, humiliating, frightening, or associated with food, rest or toileting. Spanking or any other form of physical punishment is prohibited by all child care personnel.
- ▶ **Safety:** Toxic substances and medications should be clearly labeled and stored out of child's reach. Caregivers should know first aid and CPR. The child care location should be free of radon, lead and asbestos. Indoor and outdoor play areas should be inspected regularly for safety hazards.
- ▶ **Responsiveness of the caregiver:** Caring staff should adapt their approach to meet your child's needs.
- ▶ **Appropriateness of the learning activities:** Activities should be appropriate to your child's age and stage of development.
- ▶ **Ratio of children to adults:** Good staff-to-child ratios allow for individual attention and help build strong relationships with caring, consistent adults.
- ▶ **Qualifications of teachers and caregivers:** Ask about the background and experience of all staff. Is the program accredited? Accreditation means the home or center voluntarily measures up to national standards of quality beyond the minimum licensing requirements. Caregivers in accredited programs take part in ongoing child development training and are more likely to provide positive guidance for children.
- ▶ **Turnover rate for staff and families:** Why do families leave? How does the program help children adjust to staff turnover?
- ▶ **Transportation:** Appropriate child restraints and seat belts must be used when transporting children and a log must be kept of children being transported to ensure all children have arrived safely at the destination and have exited the vehicle. Logs are required to be maintained for four months.

Florida Statutes require child care providers not exceed the following staff-to-child ratios

(Note: Some counties may have more restrictive ratios than those required by the state.)

For licensed child care facilities:

Children under 12 months:	1 to 4
Children age 12 to 23 months:	1 to 6
Children age 24 to 35 months:	1 to 11
Children age 36 to 47 months:	1 to 15
Children age 48 months to 59 months:	1 to 20
Children age 60 months (5 years old) or older:	1 to 25

A family child care provider may care for one of the following groups of children:

- 1 to 4:from birth to 12 months of age
- 1 to 6:if no more than three are under 12 months
- 1 to 10:as long as at least five children are school-age and no more than two are under 12 months of age
- 2 to 8:if more than 4 children under 24 months old
- 2 to 12:if no more than 4 children are under 24 months old

Prevention Corner

THE FOLLOWING CHECKLIST WILL HELP YOU MEASURE THE QUALITY OF A CHILD CARE HOME OR CENTER:

- Do the children look happy and appear well cared for?
- Are the children involved in age-appropriate activities?
- Are there plenty of clean, safe toys within reach of children?
- Is the program in a safe and clean environment?
- Is the space decorated in an inviting way?
- Is there a fenced-in outdoor play area?
- Are nutritional snacks or meals provided?
- Do children get a chance to make choices about their activities, allowing them as much independence as they're ready for?
- What is the typical daily schedule?
- How often do children play outdoors?
- How do caregivers resolve conflicts between children?
- What is the discipline policy?
- Do caregivers listen and talk to children individually?
- Do caregivers play with children?
- Do children receive individual attention?
- Are there opportunities for parents to help with the program, and are parents encouraged to drop in at any time?
- How long has each caregiver worked there?
- Are reference and background checks performed on all staff?
- Is the program licensed or accredited?
- What are the rates?
- Are there any additional fees?
- Is there any financial assistance available?

SPECIAL CONCERNS FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS

- Are infants and toddlers toys washed and disinfected regularly?
- Are all infants put to sleep on their backs?
- Are daily progress reports provided to parents?
- Will the caregiver make accommodations to support you if you wish to continue breastfeeding?



After you have placed your child in care, continue to visit your child care provider unannounced from time to time.

CHOOSING AFTER-SCHOOL CARE

Children are likely to spend as many hours in their after-school program as they do in school. Children in quality after-school programs tend to do better in school and have fewer problems with criminal behavior, alcohol and drugs.

Ask family members, friends and school personnel for recommendations. Call the programs and ask about availability, hours and fees. Visit the programs and interview staff.

After-school care should be different from school and different from a childcare program for younger children. Look for these features in a quality after-school program:

- ▶ Develops personal and interpersonal social skills, and promotes respect for cultural diversity. For adolescents, fosters an appropriate sense of independence based on their level of maturity.
- ▶ Provides help with homework, tutoring, and other learning activities.
- ▶ Provides new, developmentally-appropriate enrichment activities to add to students' learning at school, help them develop thinking and problem-solving skills, and spark their curiosity and love of learning.
- ▶ Provides recreational and physical activities to develop physical skills and constructively channel children's pent up energy after a day sitting in a classroom.
- ▶ Provides resources, such as a library and sports equipment.
- ▶ Provides varied activities for children, with enough art, craft and reading materials to keep children interested. Activities are adapted to suit children of different ages.

Also ask:

- ▶ Can children come before school and on holidays as well as in the afternoon? Is there an extra fee for that? Is there a late fee if you must pick up your children after the program is over?
- ▶ Can children attend only a few times a week instead of every day--to accommodate parents' schedules, to save on costs, or to allow for partial sibling care?
- ▶ What are the costs? Are there extra fees for trips, personal tutoring, and lessons?

Your child can help you evaluate her after-school care. Remember to talk with your child about the program and each day's activities.



Child Care Resources by County

ALACHUA

Early Learning Coalition of Alachua Co.
4424 NW 13th Street, Bldg. A
Gainesville, FL 32609
PHONE: (352) 375-4110 #102
FAX: (352) 375-4731
E-mail: llbowie@elcalachua.org
Web site: www.elcalachua.org

BAKER

Episcopal Children's Services
418 8th Street S.
Macclenny, FL 32063
PHONE: (904) 259-4225
PARENT LINE: 800-238-3463
FAX: (904) 259-9169
E-mail: tmatheny@ecs4kids.org
Web site: www.ecs4kids.org

BAY

Early Education and Care, Inc.
450 Jenks Ave.
Panama City, FL 32401
PHONE: (850) 872-7550
FAX: (850) 769-1066
E-mail: ngoc@eekids.org
Web site: www.eekids.org

BRADFORD

Episcopal Children's Services
1080 N. Pine Street
Starke, FL 32091
PHONE: (904) 964-1543
PARENT LINE: 800-238-3463
FAX: (904) 964-5863
E-mail: tmatheny@ecs4kids.org
Web site: www.ecs4kids.org

BREVARD

Child Care Association of
Brevard County, Inc
18 Harrison St.
Cocoa, FL 32922
PHONE: (321) 634-3500 #329
FAX: (321) 504-0921
E-mail: jhumphre@childcarebrevard.com

BROWARD

Family Central, Inc.
840 SW 81st Ave.
North Lauderdale, FL 33068
PHONE: (954) 720-1000
FAX: (954) 724-3997
E-mail: igevirtz@familycentral.org
Web site: www.familycentral.org

CALHOUN

Early Learning Coalition of NW Florida, Inc.
16908 NE Pear Street
Blountstown, FL 32424
PHONE: (850) 674-9488
FAX: (850) 674-2843
E-mail: elcofnwflorida.org
Web site: www.elcofnwflorida.org

CHARLOTTE

Early Learning Coalition of
Florida's Heartland
3028 Caring Way, Suite 4
Port Charlotte, FL 33952
PHONE: (941) 255-1650
FAX: (941) 255-5856
E-mail: oolvera@elcfh.org
Web site: www.elcfh.org

CITRUS

Childhood Development Services
5641 W. Gulf To Lake Hwy.
Crystal River, FL 34429
PHONE: (352) 795-2667
FAX: (352) 795-4041
E-mail: drainville@cdsi.org
Web site: www.childhooddevelopment.org

CLAY

Episcopal Children's Services
1845 Town Center Blvd., Ste. 150
Orange Park, FL 32003
PHONE: (904) 213-3939
PARENT LINE: 800-238-3463
FAX: (904) 278-2099
E-mail: bhenderson@ecs4kids.org
tmatheny@ecs4kids.org
Web site: www.ecs4kids.org

COLLIER

Community Coordinated Care
for Children, Inc. (4C)
201 8th Street South, Suite 200
Naples, FL 34102
PHONE: (239) 935-6100
FAX: (239) 935-6188
E-mail: cdaboin@4cflorida.org
Web site: www.4cflorida.org

COLUMBIA

Early Learning Coalition of Florida's Gate-
way, Inc.
484 SW Commerce Drive, Suite 105
Lake City, FL 32025
PHONE: (386) 752-9770
FAX: (386) 752-9786
E-mail: vbrown@elc-fg.org
Web site: www.elc-fg.org

DESOTO

Early Learning Coalition of Florida's
Heartland
4 West Oak Street, Suite H
Arcadia, FL 34266
PHONE: (863) 494-5233
FAX: (863) 494-5291
E-mail: oolvera@elcfh.org
Web site: www.elcfh.org

DIXIE

Childhood Development Services
212 N. Main Street
Chiefland, FL 32626
PHONE: (352) 493-1093
FAX: (352) 493-4465
E-mail: tscheffey@cdsi.org
Web site: www.childhooddevelopment.org

DUVAL

Early Learning Coalition of Duval County
6850 Belfort Oaks Place, Suite 102
Jacksonville, FL 32216
PHONE: (904) 208-2044
FAX: (904) 208-2043
E-mail: cburns@elcofduval.org
Web site: www.elcofduval.org

ESCAMBIA

Children's Services Center
1800 N. Palafox St.
Pensacola, FL 32501
PHONE: (850) 595-5915
R&R FAX: (850) 595-5909
FAX: 850-595-5918
E-mail: broughton@csc-wf.org
Web site: www.childrensservicescenter.org

FLAGLER

Early Learning Coalition of Flagler and
Volusia
230 N. Beach St.
Daytona Beach, FL 32114
PHONE: (386) 323-2400
PARENT LINE: 1-877-ELC-0065
(1-877-352-0065)
FAX: (386) 323-2423
E-mail: abush@elcfv.org
Web site: www.elcfv.org

FRANKLIN

Early Education and Care, Inc. (Headstart)
162 Avenue E
Apalachicola, FL 32320
PHONE: (850) 653-3366
FAX: (850) 769-1066
E-mail: ngoc@eekids.org
Web site: www.eekids.org

GADSDEN

Arbor Education and Training
Early Learning
1140 W. Clark Street
Quincy, FL 32351
PARENT LINE: 850-875-4040
E-mail: dcomer@arboret.com

GILCHRIST

Childhood Development Services
122 North Main Street
Chiefland, FL 32626
PARENT LINE: 352-493-1093
PHONE: (352) 795-2667
E-mail: Ttodd@cdsi.org
Web site: www.childhooddevelopment.org

GLADES

Community Coordinated Care
for Children, Inc.
2675 Winkler Ave.,
Suite 300
Ft. Myers, FL 33901
PHONE: 239-935-6100
PARENT LINE: 888-802-6789
FAX: 239-935-6188
E-mail: cdaboin@4cflorida.org

GULF

Early Learning Coalition of NW Florida
153 Red Fish Street
Port St. Joe, FL 32456
PARENT LINE: 850-229-6415
FAX: 850-229-1633
E-mail: ngoc@eekids.org
Web site: www.eckids.org

HAMILTON

Early Learning Coalition of Florida's
Gateway
484 Southwest Commerce Drive, Suite 105
Lake City, FL 32025
PHONE: (386) 752-9770
PARENT LINE: (866) 752-9770
FAX: (386) 752-9786
E-mail: vbrown@elc-fg.org
Web site: www.elc-fg.org

HARDEE

Early Learning Coalition of Florida's
Heartland
Hardee County Division
324 North 6th Avenue, Suite 100
Wachula, FL 33873
PHONE: (863) 767-1002
PARENT LINE: (877) 767-1002
FAX: (863) 767-1007
E-mail: cherron@elcfh.org
Web site: www.elcfh.org

HENDRY

Community Coordinated Care
for Children, Inc.
2675 Winkler Ave., Suite 300
Ft. Myers, FL 33901
PHONE: 239-935-6100
PARENT LINE: 888-802-6789
FAX: 239-935-6188
E-mail: cdaboin@4cflorida.org

HERNANDO

Childhood Development Services
20162 Cortez Blvd.
Brooksville, FL 34601
PARENT LINE
PHONE: (352) 754-5068
FAX: (352) 754544-64776049
E-MAIL: a.mchugh@phlc.org
Web site: www.childhooddevelopment.org

HIGHLANDS

Early Learning Coalition of
Florida's Heartland
209 N. Ridgewood Drive
Sebring, FL 33870
PHONE: (863) 314-9213
PARENT LINE: 800-660-9213
FAX: (863) 314-4480
E-mail: cherron@elcfh.org
Web site: www.elcfh.org

HILLSBOROUGH

Hillsborough County Public Schools/
School Readiness Program
207 Kelsey Lane, Suite K
Tampa, FL 33619
PARENT LINE: (813) 744-8941 #428
FAX: (813) 744-8954
E-mail: betsy.drake@sdhc.K12.fl.us
Web site: www.elchc.org

HOLMES

Early Education and Care, Inc.
1240 South Blvd.
Chipley, FL 32428
PHONE: (850) 638-6343
PARENT LINE: (850) 638-6344
E-mail: Cindy.olszowy@elcofnwflorida.org
Web site: www.elcofnwflorida.org

INDIAN RIVER

Early Learning Coalition of Indian
River, Martin, and Okeechobee Counties
1416 Old Dixie Highway
Vero Beach, FL 32960
PHONE: (772) 778-6344
FAX: (772) 778-6340
E-mail: cmarciniak@elcirno.org

JACKSON

Early Learning Coalition of NW Florida, Inc.
4469 Clinton St., Ste. E
Marianna, FL 32448
PHONE: (850) 482-9140
FAX: (850) 482-9143
E-mail: elcofnwflorida.org
Web site: www.elcofnwflorida.org

JEFFERSON

Arbor Education and Training
Early Learning
325 John Knox Road, Bldg. F, Ste. 140
Tallahassee, FL 32303
PHONE: (850) 385-0504
PARENT LINE: (866) 973-9030
FAX: (850) 922-0075
E-mail: dcomer@arboret.com
Web site: www.elcbigbend.org

LAFAYETTE

Early Learning Coalition of Florida's
Gateway
484 Southwest Commerce Drive, Suite 105
Lake City, FL 32025
PHONE: (386) 752-9770
PARENT LINE: (866) 752-9770
FAX: (386) 752-9786
E-mail: vbrown@elc-fg.org
Web site: www.elc-fg.org

LAKE

Child Care Choice Services
1017 W. Dixie Avenue
Leesburg, FL 34748
PHONE: (352) 315-3905
PARENT LINE: (863) 733-9064
FAX: (352) 315-3912
E-mail: lcoffield@elclc.org
Web site: www.childcarechoiceservices.com

LEE

Community Coordinated Care
for Children, Inc.
2675 Winkler Ave., Suite 300
Ft. Myers, FL 33901
PHONE: 239-935-6100
PARENT LINE: 888-802-6789
FAX: 239-935-6188
E-mail: cdaboin@4cflorida.org

LEON

Arbor Education and Training
Early Learning
325 John Knox Road, Bldg. F, Ste. 140
Tallahassee, FL 32303
PHONE: (850) 385-0504
PARENT LINE: (866) 973-9030
FAX: (850) 922-0075
E-mail: dcomer@arboret.com
Web site: www.elcbigbend.org

LEVY

Childhood Development Services
212 N. Main Street
Chiefland, FL 32626
PHONE: (352) 493-1093
FAX: (352) 493-4465
E-mail: tscheffey@cdsi.org
Web site: www.childhooddevelopment.org

LIBERTY

Arbor Education and Training
Early Learning
325 John Knox Road, Bldg. F, Ste 140
Tallahassee, FL 32303
PHONE: (850) 385-0504
PARENT LINE: 850-926-0980 #210
FAX: (850) 386-9800
E-mail: Janis.edwards@wflplus.org
Web site: www.elcbigbend.org

MADISON

Arbor Education and Training School
Readiness
326 SW Overall
Greenville, FL 32331
PHONE: (850) 385-0504
PARENT LINE: 850-948-5655
FAX: (850) 948-5927
E-mail: dcomer@arboret.com
Web site: www.elcbigbend.org

MANATEE

Resource Connection for Kids
302 Manatee Ave. E., Ste. 200
Bradenton, FL 34208
941-745-2514 (fax)
PARENT LINE: (941) 745-5949
FAX: (941) 745-2514
E-mail: lhedrick@rc4k.org
Web site: www.rc4k.org

MARION

Childhood Development Services Inc
1601 NE 25th Ave., Ste. 900
Ocala, FL 34470
PARENT LINE: 800-635-5437
FAX: (352) 629-0055
R&R FAX: (352) 620-2660
E-mail: Lfoy@cdsi.org
Web site: www.childdevelopment.org

MARTIN

Early Learning Coalition of Indian River,
Martin, and Okeechobee Counties
10 SE Central Parkway, Suite 400
Stuart, FL 34994
PHONE: (772) 220-1220
FAX: (772) 223-3868
E-mail: bpicciano@elcirmo.org

MIAMI-DADE

Department of Human Services
Child Development Services Bureau
1600 NW 3rd Ave Room #101
Miami, FL 331365
PHONE: (305) 438-4180
PARENT LINE: (305) 373-3521
E-mail: A2079@miamidade.gov
Web site: www.co.miami-dade.fl.us/dhs/
children.asp

MONROE

Wesley House Family Services, Inc.
1304 Truman Ave.
Key West, FL 33040
PHONE: 305-292-7150
PARENT LINE: (877) 595-5437
FAX: (305) 292-7156
E-mail: ccs@wesleyhouse.org
Web site: www.wesleyhouse.org

NASSAU

Episcopal Children's Services
96042 Lofton Square
Yulee, FL 32097
PHONE: (904) 491-3638
PARENT LINE: (800) 238-3463
FAX: (904) 277-7219
E-mail: tmatheny@ecs4kids.org
Web site: www.ecs4kids.org

OKALOOSA

Child Care Services
299 S. Main Street
Crestview, FL 32536
PHONE: (850) 689-7885
E-mail: Awilliams@owccs.org
Web site: www.owccs.org

409 Racetrack Road
Ft. Walton, FL 32547
PHONE: (850) 833-7587 #224

OKEECHOBEE

Early Learning Coalition of Indian River,
Martin, and Okeechobee Counties
308 NW 5th Street
Okeechobee, FL 34972
PHONE: (863) 357-1133
FAX: (863) 357-2232
E-mail: phickman@elcirmo.org

ORANGE

Community Coordinated Care for
Children, Inc.
3500 W. Colonial Dr.
Orlando, FL 32808
PHONE: (407) 522-2252
PARENT LINE: (800) 347-7602
FAX: (407) 445-7341
E-mail: Dkoronka@4cflorida.org
Web site: www.4cflorida.org

OSCEOLA

Community Coordinated Care for
Children, Inc.
1328 E. Vine Street
Kissimmee, FL 34744
PARENT LINE: (407) 846-5311
FAX: (321) 219-6017
E-mail: abanks@4ccentralflorida.org
Web site: www.4ccentralflorida.org

PALM BEACH

Family Central, Inc.
3111 S. Dixie Highway, Suite 222
West Palm Beach, FL 33405
PHONE: (561) 514-3300
PARENT LINE: (561) 655-3969 or
1-800-683-3327
FAX: (561) 655-4575
E-mail: spatterson@familycentral.org
Website: www.familycentral.org

PASCO

Youth & Family Alternatives, Inc
6740 Commerce Avenue
New Port Richey, FL 34668
PHONE: (800) 443-1024
PARENT LINE: (727) 569-1004
FAX: (727) 569-1080
E-mail: kwinson@cdsi.org
Website: www.childhooddevelopment.org

PINELLAS

Coordinated Childcare of Pinellas, Inc.
6698 68th Ave. North, Ste. B
Pinellas Park, FL 33781
PHONE: (727) 547-5700
PARENT LINE: (727) 547-5750
FAX: (727) 547-5704
E-mail: Julibarri@childcarepinellas.org
Web site: www.childcarepinellas.org

POLK

Arbor Education and Training
Early Learning
115 South Missouri Avenue, Ste. 201
Lakeland, FL 33815
PHONE: (800) 843-9780
PARENT LINE: (863) 577-2450
E-mail: sbishop@arboret.com

PUTNAM

Episcopal Children's Services
400 Highway 19 North, Suite 33
Palatka, FL 32177
PHONE: (386) 329-4878
PARENT LINE: (800) 238-3463
FAX: (386) 326-2811
E-mail: tmatheny@ecs4kids.org
Web site: www.ecs4kids.org

Prevention Corner

CHILD
care

SANTA ROSA

Early Learning Coalition of
Santa Rosa County
6564 Caroline Street
Milton, FL 32570
PARENT LINE: 850 983-5313
FAX: (850) 983-5312
E-mail: house@elcsantarosa.org

SARASOTA

Early Learning Coalition of Sarasota
2886-C Ringling Blvd.
Sarasota, FL 34237
PARENT LINE: (941) 556-1600
FAX: (941) 556-1606
E-mail:
info@childcareconnectionsarasota.org
Website:
www.earlylearning.connectionsarasota.org

897 E. Venice Avenue
Venice, FL 34285
PHONE: (941) 486-2682 ext. 112

SEMINOLE

Community Coordinated Care for
Children, Inc.
1414 Celery Avenue
Sanford, FL 32771
PARENT LINE: (407) 324-9999
FAX: (407) 324-4185
E-mail: kleslie@4cflorida.org
Web site: www.4cflorida.org

ST. JOHNS

Episcopal Children's Services
525 State Road 16
St. Augustine, FL 32084
PHONE: (904) 819-8192
PARENT LINE: (800) 238-3463
FAX: (904) 819-1732
E-mail: tmatheny@ecs4kids.org
Web site: www.ecs4kids.org

ST LUCIE

Early Learning Coalition of St. Lucie
County
804 South 6th Street
Fort Pierce, FL 34950
PARENT LINE: (772) 595-6363
PARENT LINE: (866) 590-6363
FAX: (772) 595-6081
E-mail: ghorbam01@srcslc.org

SUMTER

Childhood Development Services Inc
342 Shopping Center Drive
Wildwood, FL 34785
352-748-4005
PHONE: (352) 748-4005
PARENT LINE: (800) 635-5437
FAX: (352) 748-6600
E-mail: jirwin@cdsi.org
Web site: www.childhooddevelopment.org

SUWANNEE

Early Learning Coalition of Florida's
Gateway, Inc.
484 SW Commerce Drive, Suite 155
Lake City, FL 32025
PHONE: (386) 752-9770
FAX: (386) 752-9786
E-mail: trgriffin@elc-fg.org
Web site: www.elc-fg.org

TAYLOR

Arbor Education and Training
Early Learning
325 John Knox Road, Bldg. F, Ste. 140
Tallahassee, FL 32303
PHONE: (850) 985-0504
FAX: (850) 386-9800
E-mail: Janis.edwards@wfplus.org
Web site: www.elcbigbend.org

UNION

Early Learning Coalition of
Florida's Gate, Inc.
484 SW Commerce Drive, Suite 155
Lake City, FL 32025
PHONE: (386) 752-9770
PARENT LINE: (866) 752-9770
FAX: (386) 752-9786
E-mail: vbrown@elc-fg.org
Web site: www.elc-fg.org

VOLUSIA

Child Care Resource Network
230 N. Beach St., 2nd fl.
Daytona Beach, FL 32114
PARENT LINE: (877) 352-0065
FAX: (386) 323-2423
E-mail: abush@elcfv.org
Web site: www.elcfv.org

WAKULLA

Arbor Education-N-Training
School Readiness
Wakulla County One-Stop
3278 Crawfordville Hwy. #G
Crawfordville, FL 32327
PARENT LINE: (850) 926-0980 #210
E-mail: dcomer@arboret.com

WALTON

Child Care Services, Inc.
1184-C Circle Drive
Defuniak Springs, FL 32435
PHONE: 850-892-8560
E-mail: Awilliams@owccs.org
Web site: www.owccs.org

340 Beal Parkway
Fort Walton Beach, FL 32548
PHONE: (850) 833-3855

WASHINGTON

Early Education and Care, Inc.
1240 South Blvd.
Chipley, FL 32428
PHONE: (850) 638-6343
PARENT LINE: (850) 638-6344
E-mail: Cindy.olszowky@elcofnwflorida.org
Web site: www.ecskids.org

*If your county is not listed, call 1-800 FLA-
LOVE for referral to local childcare services.*



**Prevent Child Abuse
Florida**

