

Child Care Services

CCS-1700 LICENSING STUDIES	Effective Date: 12/01/2007
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LEGAL AUTHORITY: O.C.G.A. 20-1A-1 et seq.

Cross Reference/See Also: CCS Policies & Procedures: CCS-200 Attempted Visits; CCS-800 Compliance, Enforcement and Adverse Actions; CCS-900 Conducting Visits; CCS-1000 Criminal Background Checks; CCS-1800 Monitoring Visits; CCS-2300 POI Follow-up; CCS-2500 Professional Conduct; CCS-2900 Refutation Process

I. PURPOSE

This policy establishes guidelines for Child Care Services Consultants to conduct annual licensing inspection visits to evaluate all licensed facilities for their compliance with current rules and regulations of the Department of Early Care and Learning.

II. APPLIES TO

- A. Child Care Services Administrative Assistants
- B. Child Care Services Consultants
- C. Child Care Services Coordinators
- D. Child Care Services Managers
- E. Child Care Services Supervisors

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Child Care Learning Center (CCLC)** – any place operated by an individual or any business entity recognized under Georgia law wherein are received for pay for group care, for fewer than 24 hours per day without transfer of legal custody, seven or more children under 18 years of age and which is required to be licensed. Child Care Learning Center also includes any day care center previously licensed by the Department of Human Resources and transferred pursuant to Code Section [20-1A-1 et seq.](#)
- B. **Child Care Services Administrative Assistant** – Atlanta office-based staff responsible for the support and delivery of services both internally and externally, within the Child Care Services Division.
- C. **Child Care Services Consultants** – the persons responsible for professional consultation to child care programs and ensuring compliance with state child care licensing rules and quality indicators, within one of the six assigned Child Care Service regions (North West, North East, Central West, Central East, South West, South East) or eight specialty units (Applicant Services Unit, Complaint Unit, Enforcement Unit, Exemptions Unit, Intake Unit, Process and Quality Improvement Unit, Technical Assistance Unit, Administrative Operations Unit). Also known as Specialists within some Specialty Units.
- D. **Child Care Services Coordinator**– the persons who provide support, coordination and ensures delivery and services of the work within one of the six assigned Child Care

Service regions (North West, North East, Central West, Central East, South West, South East) or eight specialty units (Applicant Services Unit, Complaint Unit, Enforcement Unit, Exemptions Unit, Intake Unit, Process and Quality Improvement Unit, Technical Assistance Unit, Administrative Operations Unit).

- E. **Child Care Services Manager** – the persons responsible for the management and oversight, as well as the delivery and scope of work within one of the six assigned Child Care Service regions (North West, North East, Central West, Central East, South West, South East) or eight specialty units (Applicant Services Unit, Complaint Unit, Enforcement Unit, Exemptions Unit, Intake Unit, Process and Quality Improvement Unit, Technical Assistance Unit, Administrative Operations Unit).
- F. **Child Care Services Supervisor** – the persons responsible for supervising, mentoring, and ensuring delivery and services of the activities of Staff within specialty units, while working under the Unit Manager.
- G. **Core Rules** – specific rules within identified rule categories that have been identified as having the greatest impact on the health and safety to children in care. These rules are evaluated by Child Care Services Consultants during every regulatory visit at the facility and impact the overall compliance determination of the program.
- H. **Criminal Background Check One-day Letter** – a written notification advising the child care program to submit, within one (1) business day of the visit date, valid and current documentation confirming that staff have completed requirements to obtain a National or Comprehensive Criminal Background Check Determination.
- I. **DECAL KOALA** – a provider self-service website used by licensed and exempt programs to update information, submit required and requested licensing and exemption documentation, license fees, or incident/accident information, and communicate directly with the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) and Child Care Services (CCS) Staff.
- J. **Department** – refers to Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.
- K. **Director** – the on-site manager of a Child Care Learning Center designated by the legal owner who has submitted a records check application and has received a satisfactory comprehensive records check determination and who is responsible for the supervision, operation and maintenance of the Center and meets the minimum qualifications as determined by the Department.
- L. **Family Child Care Learning Home (FCCLH)** – a private residence operated by any person who receives therein for pay for supervision and care fewer than 24 hours per day, without transfer of legal custody, at least three but not more than six Children under 13 years of age who are not Related to such persons and whose Parent(s) are not residents in the same private residence as the Provider and which is required to be licensed; provided, however, that the total number of unrelated Children cared for in such Home, for pay and not for pay, may not exceed six Children under 13 years of age at one time, except that a Provider may care for two additional children three years of age or older for two designated one hour periods daily upon approval by the Department.
- M. **Formal Plan of Improvement (POI) Notice** – a letter generated through DECAL KOALA and emailed to Providers, after a visit during which serious or consistent rule violations were identified, requiring the submission of a plan for corrections within ten (10) business days.
- N. **KOALA Outback** – an online integrated program application that is used by Child Care Services (CCS) Consultants and the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) to submit, update and maintain documents and records for licensed and exempt childcare programs.
- O. **Licensing Study** – an annual on-site rule-by-rule inspection of a child care program to assess compliance with current rules and regulations.

- P. **Met** – the compliance category used on inspection reports for rules evaluated during a visit when the Provider is in compliance with all the rules in a specific category.
- Q. **Monitoring Visit** – an on-site, annual inspection made by a Child Care Services Consultant to evaluate core rules and to determine whether previous noncompliance has been corrected.
- R. **myKOALA** – an integrated scheduling, time-tracking and visit input program application that is used by Child Care Services (CCS) Consultants to schedule Provider visits and document their own daily work activities. This program application provides the ability for CCS Consultants to conduct and enter on-site visits and generate reports for child care programs throughout the State and supports consistency and a record of on-going data for the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL).
- S. **Not Applicable (NA)** – when a program does not provide or participate in a rule category (e.g., swimming, transportation, field trips, etc.)
- T. **Not Evaluated (NE)** – when a specific rule was not evaluated during the visit inspection.
- U. **Not Met** – the compliance category used on inspection reports for rules evaluated during a visit when the Provider is not in compliance with rules in a specific category.
- V. **Plan of Improvement (POI)** – a written statement that details how the Provider will correct or has corrected rule violation(s), how they will maintain the correction, and a date of correction, that is agreed upon by both the Provider and the Child Care Services Consultant.
- W. **Plan of Improvement (POI) Correction Date** – the date by which a Provider must correct noncompliance with a rule that is part of a satisfactory plan of improvement. Correction dates must fall within certain guidelines: same day, 5 days, 10 days, and 30 days, depending on the level of risk involved.
- X. **POLAR** – stands for Provider Online Agency Resource, which is an internal, interagency resource that includes provider information, previously conducted visits, approved variances, upcoming scheduled visits, etc.
- Y. **Program Official** – the persons responsible for the management and oversight of licensing requirements at a Child Care Learning Center or Family Child Care Learning Home.
- Z. **Provider** – the license holder or applicant of a Family Child Care Learning Home who has submitted a records check application and has received a satisfactory comprehensive records check determination and who is also the person that primarily provides care in the Home.
- AA. **Quarter Due** – the identified quarter during which a licensing study or monitoring visit is assigned and due.
- BB. **State File** – the paper file containing original documents pertaining to the licensing and regulation of an open Child Care Learning Center (CCLC) or Family Child Care Learning Home (FCCLH), such as, but not limited to, applications for license, measurement pages, amendments, monitoring visits, variances, and licensing studies. State files are also kept with documentation related to the application of and visits to license-exempt programs.
- CC. **Syncing Visits** – the electronic process performed by Child Care Services Consultants that uploads data from their laptops to the Department’s server.
- DD. **Worker File** – a required electronic or paper file, kept by the Child Care Services Consultant that contains copies of visits made in the last 18 months, measurement pages, a floor plan, and copies of any other pertinent information from the State file for all licensed facilities.

IV. POLICY

The policy of Child Care Services is to ensure that Child Care Services Consultants conduct annual, unannounced, on-site inspections, evaluating all rules for every licensed Child Care

Learning Center and Family Child Care Learning Home during their assigned quarter. The entire facility and all services provided by the licensee will be evaluated at this time. Child Care Services Consultants will visit each licensed facility at least two (2) times per fiscal year. Licensing studies count as one of the two regulatory visits required for the fiscal year.

V. PROCEDURES

A. CCS Consultants will plan and conduct a Licensing Study:

1. To meet the requirement for an additional regulatory visit, other than a Monitoring Visit, whether or not there were previous rule violations at a facility. This visit should be done in the opposite half of the fiscal year from the Monitoring Visit.
 - a. This visit can be completed in conjunction with a Complaint Investigation (CI), if a CI is assigned at the same time a Licensing Study (LS) has been scheduled. This allows the CI and LS to be done at the same time.
 - b. This visit should not be completed when:
 - i. A Technical Assistance (TA) visit is being conducted;
 - ii. A Category 1 Complaint/Incident Investigation visit is being conducted;
 - iii. A Quality Rated observation visit is being conducted.

B. Preparation - prior to visiting the facility the CCS Consultant will:

1. Prepare for the inspection by gathering all information about the program through KOALA Outback and the Worker File. Become familiar with any limitations to the licensed capacity, as well as any supervision plans, floor plans, restrictions, variances, waivers, etc. granted and approved for the facility. Check POLAR to see if any other visits are scheduled by Department Staff and verify if the program has Pre-K or is Quality Rated.
2. Sync the scheduled visit inspection report in myKOALA.
3. Open the visit task and enter any capacity limitations, restrictions, and comments applicable to supervision plans and/or rules not evaluated (i.e., transportation, swimming, etc.).
4. Review the facility's compliance history for the past year.
5. Print or copy the facility's last visit to use to determine if previous noncompliance has been corrected.
6. Print and prepare any checklists used during the visit to assist with evaluating rules and regulations.
 - a. New CCS Staff are required to use the Licensing Study (LS) Checklist to ensure the appropriate evaluation of all rules and regulations during onboarding and at a minimum, for the first three (3) months of independent work, known as their 100% work review period. This checklist should be submitted for review with copies of the completed visit reports to the assigned CCS Coordinators or Managers, prior to publishing visits.
 - i. Continued use of the full checklist may be recommended by CCS Managers beyond this three (3) month period.
 - b. Veteran CCS Staff are required to use a checklist (whether Department created or individually modified) to ensure a comprehensive evaluation of all rules and regulations.
7. Print or reference the adult worksheet (staff records worksheet) from the previous visit report, which lists staff employed at the facility during the last visit and the Criminal Background Check list, to assist with evaluating criminal background checks at the facility.
8. Review employee criminal background check letters in KOALA Outback prior to visit and compare to the staff list when on site. Note any employees who are in

KOALA Outback with a national, unsatisfactory or incomplete letter to review when on site.

- a. Have all forms and equipment ready and know the directions to the facility.

C. Upon arrival to conduct the on-site inspection, the CCS Consultant will:

1. Identify themselves and present their state issued ID badge, speak with the program official or person-in-charge and explain the purpose of the visit. Provide the program official with a list of the documents needed for review, if used.
2. Conduct an initial walk through of the facility in order to:
 - a. Count children and staff, and document the numbers to determine compliance with staff: child ratios and licensed space capacities;
 - i. For Family Child Care Learning Homes, documentation should also be indicated for the number of children for pay and not for pay, as well as the number of children related to the Provider.
 - b. Determine ages of children present in groups to ensure compliance with mixing of ages/ratios;
 - c. Document names of all staff present in classrooms and at the facility to verify roles and Criminal Background Checks during file review.
3. Conduct a walk-through inspection to determine compliance with all rules and regulations:
 - a. Evaluate each classroom, the facility bathroom(s) and kitchen, outdoor play area(s), vehicle(s) and transportation records, staff records, children's records, medication authorization forms, swimming and field trip documentation, operating policies and procedures, emergency preparedness plan and documentation, sign-in and out and attendance records, and supervision.
 - b. Evaluate all previous rule violations from the last visit.
 - c. Observe children's activities, lesson plans, and equipment, staff's interactions and discipline procedures with children, health and hygiene practices, and staff's supervision and care of the children.
 - d. CCS Consultants may visit each classroom more than once or for an extended period of time in order to observe and document additional activities (e.g., meals, nap procedures, changes in ratios and supervision, arrival of school age children, etc.) that may not have been observed earlier in the visit.
 - e. If needed, a LS checklist should be used when evaluating the facility to ensure that all applicable rules, including Core rules, are observed.
 - f. When reviewing files or documentation, the following should be standard:
 - i. Review 100% of Criminal Background Checks, verification of education credentials for lead staff, verification of current First Aid and CPR training and verification of required health and safety orientation training should be reviewed for all staff in every program.
 - ii. Review complete staff files for employee application, program orientation, training requirements, etc., as follows:
 - I. Review 100% of staff files for Family Child Care Learning Homes (FCCLH).
 - II. Review 10% or a minimum of five (5) (whichever is greater) staff files for Child Care Learning Centers (CCLC).
 - iii. Review to ensure that children's records contain all information and documentation as specified in the rules. The records should consist of a variety of ages. It is acceptable to review additional records if needed (e.g., when missing information is noted on the enrollment paperwork, when the program has no record on a child, when there

- are questions regarding children's ages and abilities, etc.). Records should be reviewed as follows:
- I. Review 100% of children's records for FCCLHs.
 - II. Review 5% of children's records or a minimum of five (5) records (whichever is greater) for CCLCs.
- iv. Review five (5) medication forms completed since the last visit (if applicable) to ensure that complete information has been obtained from the parent(s) as specified by the rule requirements and to verify that dispensing record documentation is complete.
 - v. Review documentation for the program's last two (2) completed field trips to include transportation checklists, parent authorization, emergency medical forms and all other documentation required by the rules.
 - vi. Review transportation requirements, if applicable.
 - I. Review documentation for the program's last two (2) weeks of routine transportation.
 1. Evaluate transportation checklists to ensure that children have been accounted for, arrival and departure times and all other required information has been documented.
 2. Check to ensure complete parental authorization and emergency medical forms are available for all children transported and any other transportation requirements specified by the rules are met.
 - II. Review transportation training for the Director and for each Staff responsible for or who participates in the transportation of children.
 1. Review current First Aid and CPR for driver and/or transportation assistant.
 2. Review the driver's valid license as required for the class of vehicle.
 - vii. Review emergency drills form to ensure the appropriate drills have been conducted and documented since the last visit.
 - viii. Ensure all required posted notices are clearly visible and posted as specified by the rules.
4. Document on the inspection report:
 - a. Each rule category as either "Met", "Not Met", "NA" or "NE".
 - b. Citations in "Findings," written according to Principles of Documentation.
 - c. Observations of classroom activities or practices observed in "Comments".
 - d. Technical Assistance in "TA" that provides guidance or advice for the program to better meet the intent of the indicated rule or regulation or to provide information on best practices.
 - e. Verification of correction of previous rule violations.
 5. Document on the cover sheet:
 - a. Numbers of children and staff observed in each room/playground and the activities in which they were engaged.
 - b. The purpose of the visit in the comments section (i.e., "The purpose of this visit was to conduct a Licensing Study and follow up on previous rule violations." Or "The purpose of this visit was to conduct a Licensing Study.")
 - c. Other comments, such as, capacity limitations (e.g., at the owner's request, by the fire marshal or by the septic tank capacity), issuance of a Formal POI notice or Criminal Background Check one-day letter, TA resources, etc.

- D. Issue a Formal Plan of Improvement Notice (POI notice) when:
1. The facility is cited for serious rule violations that were identified and could be harmful to a child; and/or
 2. The facility has shown unwillingness or inability to correct previously identified deficiencies in rules and regulations; or
 3. If deemed necessary based on the Compliance and Enforcement Determination Chart.
- E. Conduct an exit conference with the Provider, Director, or other program official:
1. Discuss the results of the inspection, to include:
 - a. Each area of compliance and noncompliance;
 - b. Each area where consistent rule violations have been observed that may warrant Adverse Action on the program; and
 - c. Each area in need of improvement (may or may not be citations) and ways to improve quality in those areas (Technical Assistance).
 2. Consult with the program official to discuss their Plan of Improvement for each citation. Input should be obtained from the program official on their plans to correct the citation and ways to ensure the rule(s) remain in compliance.
 - a. Pre-defined text should be edited to include the program official's input to ensure their complete understanding of the corrections needed and their plan to ensure compliance.
 3. Document the Plan of Improvement that was developed with the program official on the inspection report; OR
 4. If a Formal Plan of Improvement is warranted:
 - a. Discuss with the program official the process of submitting a plan of correction, to include time frames and plans for maintaining compliance.
 - b. Select the POI Notice Letter Issued box in the myKOALA visit report that will generate an email to the program containing the Formal POI letter.
 5. Run spell-check and proofread the entire report before printing/emailing it.
 6. During the exit conference, review with the program official:
 - a. The complete visit report;
 - b. The Compliance and Enforcement Determination Worksheet and the specific Violation History Level that resulted from the visit. Discuss any possible actions that may be taken based on the Violation History Level.
 - c. Criminal Background Check requirements and correction procedures (if applicable);
 - d. Resources or handouts left at the program (if applicable).
 7. Print or email a copy of the inspection report and any other documents to include: the cover page, reviewed children's records, reviewed staff records, summary report, Compliance and Enforcement Determination worksheet, history grid, CBC one-day letter, and training affidavit (if applicable) for the program official.
 8. Obtain program official's signature and CCS Consultant's signature on the cover sheet, Compliance and Enforcement Determination Worksheet, and Criminal Background Check (CBC) one-day letter, if applicable.
 9. If unable to leave a copy of the report due to myKOALA/computer issues on the date of the visit, the CCS Consultant will:
 - a. Email the report to the program (if able to do so while present at the facility).
 - b. Leave a copy of the "No Report Signature Page" and have the program official sign an additional copy for processing with the visit.
 - c. Email or mail the program a copy of the visit by the next business day.
- F. Processing the Licensing Study Visit

1. The CCS Consultant will:
 - a. Review the report for accuracy, grammar, sufficient detail, completeness, and use spell-check;
 - b. Make corrections and send a revised copy of the report and revision cover letter to the program, if applicable;
 - i. For new CCS staff that are in their 100% work review period, additional corrected copies of reports and other documents may need to be sent to the child care program after final review by the assigned CCS Coordinator/Manager.
 - c. Copy the completed Licensing Study for the Worker File;
 - d. Ensure that the completed visit is synced in myKOALA, no later than the next business day.
 - i. For new CCS staff that are in their 100% work review period, visit reports should not be marked as completed and synced in myKOALA, until after they have been reviewed by the assigned CCS Coordinator/Manager and approval to sync has been given.
 - e. If a Formal Plan of Improvement Notice was left:
 - i. Ensure that policies and procedures in CCS-2300 POI Follow-up are followed.
 - f. Submit the original report, Compliance and Enforcement Determination Worksheet, and any documents associated with the visit (i.e. photos, copied documentation) or any notices or letters issued to the program to the assigned CCS Administrative Assistant no later than ten (10) business days after completion;
 - i. For new CCS staff that are in their 100% work review period, complete copies of the visit report and all documentation should be submitted (scanned and emailed) weekly to the assigned CCS Coordinator/Manager for review.
 - ii. The assigned CCS Coordinator/Manager will review all documents submitted for accuracy and thoroughness, within five (5) business days of receipt.
 - I. If corrections are needed, the assigned CCS Coordinator/Manager will notify the assigned CCS Consultant and changes shall be made within two (2) business days.
 - II. The assigned CCS Consultant shall submit all completed and corrected work as required in (f.) above, after review and approval by the assigned CCS Coordinator/Manager.
 - iii. If there are changes that will require an amendment to the license, refer to CCS-100 Amendments.
2. The CCS Administrative Assistant will:
 - a. File the Licensing Study and any attached documents in the State File within five (5) business days of receipt.

VI. APPLICABLE FORMS/DOCUMENTS, ETC.

- A. CCLC Indicator Manual
- B. CCLC Rules & Regulations
- C. FCCLH Indicator Manual
- D. FCCLH Rules & Regulations
- E. Field Visit Forms (Working Aids)
 1. CCLC Documentation Needed for Licensing Study

2. CCLC Licensing Study Checklist
 3. Consanguinity-Affinity Chart
 4. FCCLH Definition Guidance
 5. FCCLH Documentation Needed for Licensing Study
 6. FCCLH Licensing Study Checklist
 7. Staff-File Checklist
- F. Revision Cover Letter

VII. ASSOCIATED TRAININGS

- A. Child Care Learning Centers Core Rules
- B. Child Care Learning Centers Non-Core Rules
- C. Criminal Background Checks
- D. Family Child Care Learning Home Core Rules
- E. Family Child Care Learning Home Non-Core Rules
- F. KOALA Training
- G. Principles of Documentation