



Initial License Policy and Procedures

The Applicant Services Unit (ASU) in the Child Care Services (CCS) division at the Department of Early Care and Learning (DECAL) is responsible for processing applications to become licensed child care centers and family child care learning home providers in Georgia. ASU also processes change of ownerships. The unit determines program compliance with rules and regulations prior to issuing permission to operate a licensed child care program. Persons or organizations wishing to open a licensed child care program must first attend the Child Care Learning Center (CCLC) Licensure Orientation Meeting (LOM) which can be accessed online through the Georgia Professional Development System for Early Educators (GaPDS) found at www.gapds.dec.state.ga.us. Key information is provided to interested parties during the LOMs to help them determine if opening a licensed child care program is a good business fit, and to outline steps in the process of becoming licensed. Attendees receive a certificate after completing the LOM, which is required documentation when they apply for a child care license. The certificate is valid for two years. The licensure application for centers is located online via DECAL KOALA and requires supporting documents. The licensure application for family providers consists of one part and supporting documentation. Additional documents that must be submitted with the completed application, include floor and site plans, completed corresponding checklists, operation plan and completed checklist, a copy of the LOM certificate, written zoning approval from the local agency with jurisdiction, ownership papers and articles of incorporation/organization or partnership agreement, a signed lease agreement, home owners association (HOA) approval letter, a sale or purchase agreement, and a lawful presence verification form. Once received by ASU, the application is entered into DECAL's electronic system. If any information is missing or incomplete from the application, an administrative assistant will make a note of the application as incomplete in DECAL's electronic system and the assigned consultant will contact the applicant. If all the required information is received with the application, the application is assigned to an ASU consultant for further processing. Throughout the licensing process, the assigned ASU consultant will track progress and correspondence with the applicant to ensure the application for licensure is moving forward. A process is in place if progress on the application stalls for more than 30 days and needs to be returned to the applicant. In most cases, the assigned ASU consultant reviews the additional documentation submitted with the application and notifies the applicant of approval or required revisions. Applicants should include all additional documentation, including all remaining applicable approvals, comprehensive fingerprint background checks for all staff, CPR and First Aid for all staff, Lead Teacher credentials, certificate showing the director completed the required 40-hour Director training, Director's CPR and First Aid, and verification of education credentials for the director. Application will be approved, or the applicant will be contacted to make revisions, or provide complete information. Once the application is approved, the ASU consultant schedules a phone conference to review the Initial licensing checklist and schedules an Initial Licensing Study (ILS) on-site visit. During the thorough ILS, the ASU consultant reviews all items listed on the initial licensing checklist examining staff and children's files, inspecting vehicles, and all portions of the building or home identified in the licensing application, and all equipment to be used in the care of children. A thorough inspection is conducted to evaluate compliance with all licensing rules, and results of "met," "not met," "not applicable," or "not evaluated," are documented on the written inspection report providing details of observations and discussions. Technical assistance may also be provided to help providers better meet the intent of the rule and provide information about best practices. In addition to evaluating rules during the inspection, the ASU consultant measures each classroom and playground to

determine capacities for each area, and obtains additional forms needed from the applicant. At the end of the inspection visit, the consultant conducts an exit conference with the applicant reviewing the results of the inspection noting areas of compliance and non-compliance and obtaining plans of improvement if needed for citations. The ASU consultant will give permission to operate (PTO) if the program meets the threshold of compliance established for licensing. If the program does not meet the threshold for licensing, they are given additional time and support to meet rules and another inspection is scheduled to verify correction of previous rule violations.