

FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES



Many parents choose Family Child Care homes (FCCH) because of the informal setting, ages accepted, flexible hours and fees, and availability. This handout is designed to help you decide if Family Child Care is the correct choice for you and your child.

Environment

In San Francisco, FCCH are licensed in the caregivers' own homes, townhouses, condominiums, apartments, and flats. As long as the environment passes the health and safety inspection and the licensee is living in the home, it is eligible to be licensed.

Licensing

The State Department of Social Services (DSS) Community Care Licensing Division requires any person providing care to the children of two or more families (excluding their own) to have a license. This license covers basic health and safety, general cleanliness, use of child gates to block off access to stairs and areas posing danger, and childproofing cabinets and electrical outlets. Fingerprint clearances are also required for FCCH providers, assistants, and anyone over the age of 18 living in the home, whether or not they are present when care is given.

FCCH providers are required to have 15 hours of training per year. This training must cover pediatric CPR and first aid, infection control, and prevention of communicable diseases. Electives may include nutrition, child development, or curriculum, for example. There are no specific requirements for college units in child development for FCCH. Many FCCH providers, however, participate in informal training, enroll in college courses, and have college degrees.

Capacity

In January of 1997, regulations for FCCH capacity changed. Previously, FCCH were licensed for six children with no more than three under 2 years of age. Others were licensed as large FCCH, and could have 12 children (with an assistant) with no more than four under 2 years of age.

The 1997 law change allows providers to accept two school-aged children, for a total capacity of eight or 14. There are several adult-to-child ratio requirements that apply depending upon the age of the children in care. (See handout, *Licensed Capacity: Family Child Care Homes*). To take advantage of this capacity increase, a provider must have signed consent from their landlord (if renting), signed notification forms from the parents, and either a license with a capacity of eight or 14 or a signed addendum to the original license of six or 12.

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Flexibility

FCCH are an attractive option for many parents because of their flexibility in key areas such as fees, hours, ages served and willingness to assist with toilet training. Although FCCH slots are generally not subsidized, providers may choose to accept subsidized payments. For families who do not qualify for subsidized child care and find it difficult to pay market rates, FCCH are an option, as fees are usually negotiable. While the hours for center-based programs are generally fixed, a number of family child care providers offer non-traditional hours in the evenings and on weekends. Some even provide drop-in, temporary, emergency, and sick child care (for non-contagious children only). Most family child care providers accept ages 0–5 years and do not have a waiting list. Many FCCH providers are willing to work with the child and help in the toilet training process.

Structure

When looking at family child care homes as an option, consider the structure. Some are purely custodial in nature, and children engage in many of the same activities as they would in their own homes. Others are structured along the same lines as a preschool or nursery with a curriculum and educational activities. Both are valid options. Once you've decided on the structure, consider group size. Many parents (especially those with infants) prefer the smaller ratio found in small FCCH. Others, perhaps due to increased opportunities for children's social interaction, choose large FCCH. Also consider the ages of the children in the group. Many providers care for infants as well as preschool and school-age children. Ask yourself if this is an acceptable age range and for you and your child.

Abundance

FCCH are more readily available, especially for infants. Centers for infants in San Francisco are few and far between, and most have waiting lists anywhere from six to 18 months. There are approximately 500 active family child care home providers listed on our database. Call our agency Referral Line at **(415) 343-3300** to get referrals for these providers.

Please Note: Licensing is not a guarantee of quality. It is up to you as the parent to make sure that the place you choose is acceptable to you. Before placing your child(ren) in care, we strongly suggest that you review a potential provider's licensing history, which should be available at the facility or home. The Community Care Licensing Division of the Department of Social Services (DSS) will provide complaint information as a community service. To use this free service, it is best if you have already viewed the facilities and narrowed down your search to two or three providers. To speak with Community Care Licensing, call (650) 266-8843.

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