

As parents, one of the most important decisions that we will ever make is to choose who will care for our children while we are working or attending school. While there are many people to choose from, the trick is to find the best person to meet the needs of the child and the parents.

Because the health, safety and development of all children are so important, it is vital that child care providers be trained to give the best possible care. Keeping this in mind, the current family child care policy at Dyess AFB states that any individuals caring for other families' children a total of more than 10 hours a week on a regular basis must be licensed to provide care in on-base quarters. This does not include:

- individuals who occasionally provide care for a friend or neighbor
- individuals providing baby-sitting on an occasional basis for other families
- teenagers doing evening or weekend baby-sitting for families
- child care provided in the parents' own home
- parent cooperatives where one of the parents provides supervision for other parents' children on an exchange basis for social functions and no fees are involved
- temporary full-time care of a child during a parent's absence for temporary duty or deployment by the person listed on the AF Form 357, Family Care Plan.

You can compute the requirement to be licensed by multiplying the number of hours the provider offers care on a regular basis by the number of children in care. For example, if an individual provides care one afternoon a week for 4 children for 3 hours, they must be licensed. Anyone providing more child care than the allowed amount must be approved by the Mission Support Group Commander as a licensed child care provider.

Persons who are suspected of providing unlicensed child care will receive a letter from the Family Child Care Coordinator, who will ensure the regulation is understood and encourage the person to become a licensed provider. Persons who continue to provide unlicensed care are subject to the loss of their housing privileges on Dyess AFB.

There are many reasons for parents to choose licensed care over unlicensed care. Parents can feel secure knowing that their child is in a regulated environment that is subject to monthly unannounced inspections. The inspections focus on a variety of health, safety and child development areas. This helps to insure that the best quality care is consistently provided. In addition licensed providers are required to be CPR and First Aid certified and must receive 24 hours of training per year.

There are also many advantages to becoming a licensed Family Child Care professional. It can provide the opportunity to establish a career while remaining home with your own children. The business of Family Child Care is booming and the satisfaction of running your own home based business can be wonderful! The Family Child Care office will provide all of the necessary training to become licensed. There is no charge for this training.

Many people who consider starting a childcare business in their home are deterred by the potential start-up costs. The costs are significantly reduced for licensed providers because they have the support of the Family Childcare Resource Center. This enables providers to borrow much of the equipment they will need to set up their home for child care. Items such as cribs, shelving, highchairs, safety gates and many developmental toys are available, free of charge. The only real start-up cost is to acquire liability insurance for the child care business.

Another advantage to becoming a licensed provider is that you may also enroll in the USDA food program. This program allows providers to be reimbursed for the meals they prepare for the children in care. This helps to ensure the highest quality food is being served to the children

When choosing child care there are so many things to consider, but the most important one is the quality of care the child receives. A parent's peace of mind is fulfilled when leaving a child in the care of a nurturing, trained professional. Obtaining a Family Child Care license to provide more than 10 total hours of care in your home per week is rewarding as well as being mandatory on Dyess AFB.

For further information on how to find a child care provider to meet your needs, on how to become a provider, or to confidentially report unlicensed care, please feel free to call 696 - 2839