



**Early Childhood
Community
Coalition**
LAKE COUNTY, IL

Survey of Child Care Providers Concerning Licensing

Summary Report

**Conducted by the
*Early Childhood Community Coalition of Lake County***

Survey conducted during November and December 2016

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Results received in November and December 2016

The Early Childhood Community Coalition of Lake County (IL), a not-for-profit organization of community partners and leaders who advocate and collaborate to support childhood growth, development, and school readiness; surveyed child care and early education providers in Lake County child care centers and homes, concerning their experiences with licensing and license renewals. In Illinois, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) licenses child-care providers. A total of 100 providers responded to the survey (available in English and Spanish), either on paper or online; 52% responded in Spanish and 48% in English.

15% reported not knowing the licensing representative's name.

Survey respondents reported the date of each provider's **last visit from their licensing representative**. Although the State's licensing calls for annual visits to each child care center and child care home, the most recent visit dates (reported in November-December 2016) ranged from November 2012 to November 2016.

50% occurred in the past year

25% more than two years

10% in 2013

1 agency last visit was 2012

A good number of respondents felt that DCFS is not staffed sufficiently for visits.

54% of respondents reported that **the reason for their last visit** was a license renewal visit, and 35% reported that the last visit was an annual visit. Other reasons for visits included new licenses, child-care providers moving to a new place, a visit concerning a child having sustained an injury, and a parent complaint.

Nearly 25% of surveyed providers reported **not receiving paperwork to renew their licenses on time**, which delayed renewals, although nearly three quarters of providers reported receiving the paperwork by the license expiration.

36% of respondents reported that their **relicensing visits did not occur before their licenses expired**, making it impossible to renew their licenses on time. 60% said that their relicensing visit occurred in time. 12% reported that the visits were more than 3 months after their licenses expired, and one said the visit still had not yet occurred. Twenty others reported such visits from 1 week to 3 months late.

Among providers who reported that relicensing visits occurred after their licenses had expired, providers reported months passing (for examples, June to December, February to July, and October to December) and **having to operate during these times without a license**. This involves getting waivers for parents who rely on assistance and, in some cases, waiting without knowing when a representative will come.

The majority of survey respondents agreed or “somewhat agreed” that their **licensing representatives provide them with feedback, information, upcoming changes in requirements or procedures**, and so forth. However, about a quarter of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed. A sizable number of respondents reported that their licensing representatives do not advise them of changes regarding licensing.

About 60% of providers who responded to the survey expressed concerns about licensing and renewals. They voiced concerns about the license representative staffing at DCFS and the heavy workloads of the representatives; problems communicating with the representatives; perceived differences in how various representatives review child care centers and homes or explain the requirements; the time devoted to paperwork; and the stretches of time involved in license renewals.

Sample child care providers’ statements about licensing/renewal:

Each quotation (paragraph) is from a different child-care professional.

If your rep’s relicensing visit occurred after your license expired, how long did it take to complete your renewal? Brief summary of your licensing visit:

- “My relicensing was up in June 2015; the rep came out in Dec. 2015, and it was passed.”
- “At least 6 months – my center license took over a full year to complete.”
- “My license expired in February of 2015. The licensing rep came out in July of 2015. Since that time, I have had two announced visits by different reps.”
- “Our renewal was for October 2014, but we were not licensed until December; we had to get a waiver for our parents who rely on assistance, because it showed that our license was expired.”
- “Two months after, it’s still expired. [The representative] requested some documents, such as a new emergency plan, which I had not known were necessary.”
- “My license expired on September 30, and still she has not come.”

What concerns do you have regarding licensing?

-“I have been part of licensing procedures for 40 years...I am not one to be intimidated by licensing, but my last one was enough to make me consider getting out of the child-care business.”

-“...Each rep looks at different things at the school and has their own interpretation of how it should look and be done. We do not get the information we need soon enough, and then the wording is so vague that we must interpret it ourselves. I can’t say I like our rep very much; he is extremely unprofessional in his dress and attitude.”

-“We were licensed on time, but only because I called and followed through asking for application, forms, etc. We had no one assigned, but then we were assigned to someone [a representative] out of our area. I am also concerned because we used to be asked about changes before they were made. Now the legislature seems to be making changes we knew nothing about nor had any say in. Many of these changes are so costly; they are going to run small schools out of business. Only the larger ones can possibly absorb the costs. Also the changes are costly to daycare/preschool staff who cannot afford to meet some of the new licensing directives. Parents can’t afford to pick up these costs, workers can’t afford it, and the centers can’t afford it. It is VERY DISCOURAGING!”

-“DCFS doesn’t do the annual visits and don’t advise of changes. When it is time to renew, we don’t know that [there are] new requirements...”

-“Lack of un-announced visits, reps from other counties, reps who do not know us or want to be a resource for us; licensing process [is] very stressful and not focused on the quality of the program – only what they can find wrong.”

-“Whether I’m going to get updated information. There is a lot of info out there that I don’t know about, and it’s sprung on me at licensing time – a surprise.”

-“Every rep has different interpretations of regs and who is qualified as a head teacher. One rep says yes; the next says no.”

- “Never get a hold of any reps; don’t know who my rep is.”

-“There [are] huge discrepancies between reps. I have needed assistance and get no help. Where can I record my complaints as they write centers up for non-compliance?”

- “Not enough supervision around; this department is spread too thin, and each licenser interprets standards subjectively.”

-“They don’t go by black and white. They interpret “gray” and change the interpretation from one person to the next. I challenge them, and I live in black and white, so they don’t like me!”

-“DCFS has a very small staff. This complicates the process of obtaining a license.”

-“That my licensing representative does not help us correct our mistakes and uses a very bad, demanding style of correcting us...”

-“My license is about to expire, and I have not had any information; I have called and left messages, and no one has responded so far.”

-“There is only one representative who speaks Spanish, and there are more than 300 providers.”

- “DCFS has lost all paperwork and forms to renew the license twice. In one of these cases, DCFS could not renew it; they gave me a new license with a different number because the time had passed when they could renew it.”