

Issue ALERT

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State's Child Care Regulations Fall Short of National Standards

Briefly:

Indiana's requirements for licensing and registering child care facilities lag behind national guidelines by as much as 80 percent, according to a recent study that compares state regulations to roughly 200 national health and safety standards endorsed by the American Public Health Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Recent reports of child deaths in out-of-home child care settings in Gary, Carmel, Indianapolis, and elsewhere have called new attention to child care health and safety issues. For example, between March 2000 and March 2001, nine infants or toddlers died in licensed and unlicensed child care settings¹, some of them through negligence and abuse.

Background:

Child care in Indiana takes many forms – grandparents supervising a single toddler, stay-at-home moms overseeing a mix of her own and her neighbor's children, a group of infants and young children being cared for in a home or center, and church-based programs. Indiana law regulates health and safety standards for three types of child care settings: licensed centers, licensed homes, and registered child care ministries.

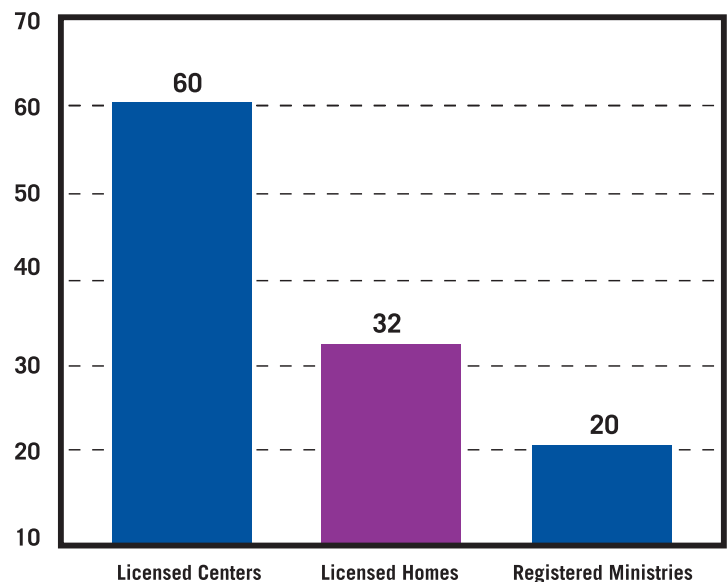
A thorough comparison of Indiana's licensing and registration requirements and the standards identified by national experts was recently conducted by Patricia Cole, Project Coordinator for Healthy Child Care Indiana, based at the Indiana Institute on Disability and Community at Indiana University, Bloomington².

¹Indiana Department of Health statistics.

The comparison found:

- ▶ Indiana's licensing requirements for child care centers significantly addressed 60 percent of the national standards.
- ▶ Indiana's licensing requirements for child care homes reflected slightly more than 30 percent of the national standards at a significant level.
- ▶ Indiana's registration requirements for child care ministries significantly complied with 20 percent of the national standards.

Percent of National Health and Safety Performance Standards Significantly Addressed by Indiana's Child Care Licensing and Registration Requirements



²The report was completed with federal funding from Healthy Child Care Indiana- A Health Systems Development in Child Care Grantee awarded to The Indiana Parent Information Network, 4 H24 MC00029-03. Additional support was provided by Indiana University Institute on Disability and Community. For a copy of the complete study: www.iidc.indiana.edu/~ecc/documents/comparison.pdf

By necessity, a discussion of the state's child care standards must also include a look at enforcement of these standards. Currently, regulators at the Bureau of Child Development at the Indiana Family & Social Services Administration each have an average of approximately 250 child care facilities to monitor. This is three times as many as the number deemed necessary by the American Public Health Association and American Academy of Pediatrics for adequate supervision and enforcement.

Implications:

Three out of five Hoosier children under the age of 6 spend at least part of each working day in the care of someone other than their parents³. In 2000, 102,729 children were cared for in licensed child care centers and homes⁴, most of them in settings which are required to comply with fewer than half the national standards for health and safety.

No statistics are available on the number of children cared for in registered child care ministries, which have the fewest state requirements and have no limit on the number of children they can serve.

Specifics:

The national standards cover a wide range of basic issues intended to protect children from harm. Among them are: the number of caregivers, training, the size of the facility, nutrition, sanitation, health protection, age-appropriate activities, equipment, and transportation. Indiana's regulations appropriately address several of these issues, partially address others, and are silent on many.

How we measure up:

Indiana's requirements significantly address several of the national standards. For example, all licensed or registered settings, to some extent, require policies to prevent the spread of infectious disease, guidelines for safe food preparation, sanitation practices, and staff training in CPR and First Aid. However, the degree to which Indiana's three regulated child care settings are required to fulfill these health and safety standards varies.

Indiana's regulated child care settings are currently only required to meet an average of 37% of the national standards recommended to protect the health and safety of young children.

³2000 Supplemental Census, U.S. Census Bureau.

⁴Indiana Family and Social Services Administration, 2000 Demographic Trend Report.

How we don't measure up:

A significant number of the national standards are not addressed in Indiana's licensure and registration requirements. These include requirements for safe playground equipment and maintenance, communication between staff and parents, sound nutrition practices, developmentally appropriate activities, and medication administration and storage. For example:

- ❖ Indiana's regulations for licensed child care centers do not match national standards for playground equipment safety, fail to ensure that staff have current immunizations, and lack requirements for policies and procedures related to the inclusion of children with special needs.
- ❖ State guidelines for licensed child care homes do not address the use or storage of toxic substances, and child-to-staff ratio requirements are significantly above recommended levels. In addition, licensed homes are not required to report serious injuries or deaths to state regulators.
- ❖ The Hoosier State's requirements for registered child care ministries do not include child-to-staff ratios, educational or health requirements for staff, medicine storage and administration policies, playground safety requirements, or fire codes.

Recent Efforts:

The state of Indiana has continued to make good faith efforts to improve the quality of childcare available to Hoosiers. For example:

- ❖ Senate Bill 1110, passed in 2001, requires all child care providers who receive state reimbursements (regardless of licensure or registration) to meet eight minimum standards.
- ❖ Senate Bill 1110 also created minimum educational requirements for all licensed child care home providers.
- ❖ In 2000, the Bureau of Child Development created a four-tiered system of reimbursement for child care providers who receive state vouchers, offering incentive for increasing the quality of a limited number of child care settings.
- ❖ In 2001, the Bureau of Child Development and the Indiana Association for Child Care Resource and Referral launched a Web site that allows parents to locate licensed or registered child care facilities near their home or work. Care Finder Indiana (www.carefinderindiana.org) also allows parents to have on-line access to licensure violations for licensed child care centers and ministries (but not licensed homes at this time).
- ❖ Currently, the State of Indiana and its partnering higher education institutions are piloting web-based instruction for 100 child care providers wishing to earn a CDA (Child Development Associate) credential. It is hoped that in future years, this service can train additional child care professionals. More information on Child Care Learning can be found at www.in.gov/fssa/childcarelearning/.

Conclusion:

In the last two years, the state of Indiana has made progress towards improving the quality of child care available to Hoosiers. However, even with this progress, Indiana's regulations for child care environments are limited in scope when compared to national standards. In addition, many of the newer regulations only apply to providers who receive state vouchers. While it should be noted that there are certainly child care facilities that exceed state requirements for licensure or registration, Indiana's regulated child care settings are currently only required to meet an average of 37% of the national standards recommended to protect the health and safety of young children.

Action:

Parents, communities, and state policy makers should consider the following action steps.

- Parents can refer to national standards and their importance when examining potential child care settings for their children of all ages. An overview of these national guidelines can be viewed at <http://nrc.uchsc.edu> or by contacting the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care at 1-800-598-KIDS.
- Parents can view a comparison of the components of Indiana's licensure and registration requirements for regulated centers, homes, and ministries at www.carefinderindiana.org.
- Parents can also view and provide comments on proposed state licensing requirements for child care centers available in Fall 2001 at all public libraries, local Offices of Family and Children, and at www.in.gov/legislature/register/september-1-2001.html.
- State and local policy makers must continue educating themselves on the crucial health and safety issues affecting child care in this state, and decide if state regulations, data collection, and monitoring need to be revised and updated.
- Child care providers should learn more about the national standards, develop plans and policies that better reflect the national standards, and get additional training through programs such as T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood® Indiana at 1-800-657-7577. T.E.A.C.H. is a project of the Indiana Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Businesses, civic organizations and grantmakers should get involved by helping set up model child care facilities, providing scholarships for child care worker trainings, and organizing volunteers to work with the facilities to assist them in complying with national standards.
- Media should focus attention on child care issues through editorials, special reports, and stories of how local child care settings are working to provide safe, dependable, and age-appropriate child care.

Percent of National Health and Safety Performance Standards Significantly Addressed by Indiana's Licensure and Registration Requirements

| National Standards Topics | Percent of Standards Significantly Addressed | | |
|---|--|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| | Licensed Child Care Centers | Licensed Child Care Homes | Registered Child Care Ministries |
| Staffing Child: staff ratio; group size; staff qualifications; training; staff health, benefits, and evaluation; and health consultants | 72% | 40% | 14% |
| Activities for Healthy Development Program for development activities by age group, supervision, field trips, discipline, parent relationships | 38% | 6% | 0% |
| Health Protection and Health Promotion Growth data, diapering and toilet training, hygiene/toilet sanitation, management and prevention of illness, emergency, facilities for ill children, smoking and prohibited substances | 70% | 49% | 19% |
| Nutrition and Food Service Nutrition for special groups or ages, staffing, meal service, kitchen and equipment, food safety, maintenance | 74% | 22% | 16% |
| Facilities, Supplies, Equipment and Transportation Overall space and equipment requirements, indoor space and equipment, playground and outdoor areas, swimming, wading and water, maintenance for safety, transportation | 38% | 34% | 31% |
| Infectious Disease Respiratory infections, enteric and Hepatitis A virus infections, vaccine-preventable disease, HIV policies | 56% | 56% | 44% |
| Children with Special Needs Integration, evaluation process prior to enrollment, developing a service plan, service coordination, facilities assessment, special requirements and equipment, transition | 46% | 0% | 0% |
| Administration Management plan and statement of services; supervision and discipline policy; health, emergency, and sanitation plan; training; program development; regulatory coordination | 57% | 33% | 19% |
| Plans and Policies Child records, disease related policies, training for child care providers, emergency plans, infant feeding policies, immunizations | 75% | 50% | 0% |

Other Indiana Youth Institute Information Resources

Questions? 800-343-7060 or www.iyi.org

IYI Weekly Update

- An award-winning one-page bulletin, faxed or e-mailed FREE, that provides the latest youth development news and reports, program suggestions, training opportunities, and a regular Grant Tip of the Week. Subscribe by calling 800-343-7060.

Kids Count in Indiana Data Book

- Our annual report of objective and reliable county-by-county statistics on the well-being of children and youth in Indiana – with state data available in a handy Pocket Guide form.

Virginia Beall Ball Library

- One of the Midwest's finest collections of books, journals, videos and curriculum guides that assist youth workers with program development, strategic planning and nonprofit management. All available for free loan statewide.

IYI Web Site – www.iyi.org

A one-stop resource for youth workers and anyone who works with youth, including data on Indiana children, updates on new reports, and links to other relevant sites.

For a description of the methodology used in this comparison and details of the results, a complete copy of the report can be obtained at <http://www.iidc.indiana.edu/~ecc/documents/comparison.pdf> or by contacting Patricia Cole at (812) 855-6508.

For more information:

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