



Early Learning and Child Care Initiative

Family Home Day Care Program

Guide to Starting A Family Home Day Care Agency

Table of Contents

Introduction and Overview	3
Resources to Help with the Application Process	3
Step 1: DEVELOPING A CHILD CARE PHILOSOPHY FOR YOUR AGENCY.....	4
Step 2: REGISTERING YOUR AGENCY	4
Step 3: ASSESSING COMMUNITY NEED	6
Step 4: CHOOSING A SITE	8
Step 5: COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FORM.....	9
Step 6: DEVELOPING THE AGENCY'S PROPOSAL	9
Step 7: DESCRIBING THE PROGRAM AND SERVICES	10
Step 8: PREPARING A BUSINESS CASE.....	11
Step 9: PREPARING A BUDGET.....	11
Step 10: DESCRIBING DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES.....	12
Step 11: PREPARING A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN.....	12
Step 12: DESCRIBING THE FAMILY HOME APPROVAL PROCESS.....	13
Step 13: PREPARING A SAMPLE SERVICE AGREEMENT	14
Step 14: ANNUAL ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING PROCESS	14
Step 15: MAINTAINING CHILDREN'S RECORDS.....	15
Step 16: DESCRIBING THE PROPOSED SITE	16
Step 17: SUBMITTING APPLICATION AND PROPOSAL.....	16
Step 18: PREPARING SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.....	17
Step 19: DEVELOPING AGENCY POLICIES	17
Step 20: AGENCY STAFF.....	19
Step 21: PROOF OF FIRE, HEALTH, SAFETY ETC COMPLIANCE.....	19
Step 22: PROOF OF INSURANCE	20
Step 23: CHILD ABUSE REGISTER AND CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK.....	20
Step 24: SUBMITTING THE SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION.....	22

Introduction and Overview

These guidelines have been prepared to provide information and assistance on the application and licensing processes for those who are interested in establishing a family home day care agency. The Family Home Day Care Program Regulations describe the requirements for agency establishment and licensing. This guide will provide the applicant with practical ideas and advice in respect to these processes.

Resources to Help with the Application Process

The regulations indicate that applicants are required to submit documents and information to the Department of Community Services (see Appendix "A" for the complete list). These guidelines provide details on how to complete and prepare the required information. To enable this process; templates and samples of the documents and policies required are available in paper form and online in down-loadable formats (see Department of Community Services website at http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/families/elcc_family_home_day_care.html)

In addition to this guide and the templates and samples identified above, the Department of Community Services also has early childhood development personnel to assist applicants with the processes. Call or drop by the regional office for the Department of Community Services to obtain contact information for the Early Childhood Development Officer (ECDO) in your area (see Appendix "B" for list of all regional offices, including addresses and phone numbers).

Contacts with the licensed child care operators, professional child resource organizations and consultants in early childhood education may also provide useful information. Contact information for these individuals can also be obtained through the Department of Community Services regional offices. (See Appendix "B" for list of all regional offices, including addresses and phone numbers).

Before making any decisions that may be difficult to change at a later date, applicants should contact the municipal, fire and health officials to discuss plans. Please be prepared to show plans for construction or renovating the space.

In addition to Community Services staff, the following resources are available to applicants:

- Municipal planning staff and building inspectors (listed in the blue pages, usually under Planning Department) - for zoning and building inspection information
- Health Inspectors, Department of Agriculture (Call the manager in your region) - for food and water safety inspections
- Office of the Fire Marshal, Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Labour or local fire department - regarding fire safety rules.

Now let's get started on the steps involved in establishing a family home day care agency.

Step 1: DEVELOPING A CHILD CARE PHILOSOPHY FOR YOUR AGENCY

Before you apply to open a family home day care agency, you need to develop a vision for the child care and support services the agency will provide. This involves identifying early childhood education program objectives and determining how your agency will meet them, and then articulating them in a statement of philosophy for the agency. Agency will clearly outline the child development model the agency will follow and must set out the expectations the agency will have for the family day care homes that it will support.

In the development of your philosophy statement it is advised that you consider whether the agency will be a profit or non-profit organization (see Step 2 for more details on the distinction).

If you are already a licensed child care centre, you could potentially use documents that were submitted as part of your application to be licensed as a centre. The statement of philosophy is one such document: it was included in your application for a day care license so, before developing a whole new philosophy statement, you should review this document to see if it is appropriate for a family home day care agency. Since a philosophy statement is focussed on the agency's views about how children learn and develop, rather than the kinds of services the agency plans to provide to families and children, the day care's philosophy statement may well be applicable to the agency. If the statement of philosophy which was prepared for the day care centre at the time of licensing needs any changes to properly articulate the agency's statement of philosophy, you must submit a new statement of philosophy with your application for an agency license.

Some sample statements of philosophy are attached as Appendix "C".

Step 2: REGISTERING YOUR AGENCY

Once you have a clear vision of what you wish to achieve through the establishment of a family home day care agency, you must register your business or organization with the Registry of Joint Stock Companies. Please note, if you have concerns about the viability of establishing a family home day care agency, you may wish to complete Step 3 (Community Needs Assessment) before expending money to register your business.

Note: If your organization or business is already registered and in good standing at the Registry of Joint Stock Companies (e.g. a licensed day care, a non-profit society, an established business), you do not need to register another business or society, unless you feel it is appropriate. You will need the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) business number and other information for your organization or business that is available online at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/snsmr/rjsc/> or through the Registry of Joint Stock Companies (see below for contact information).

Any organization or business that is not registered at the Registry of Joint Stock Companies must do so in order to be licensed. A family home day care agency can be either a non-profit or a commercial organization:

- Non-profit agencies are established under the *Societies Act* and are managed by a group of volunteers who form a Board of Directors, or by a non-profit organization such as a church or community organization. The Board is legally responsible for all policy, administrative, and service delivery decisions. Non-profit organizations are required to reinvest any surplus revenue back into the organization.
- Commercial agencies are private businesses operated by a sole proprietor, a partnership or a corporation. Decisions are made by the owner. The owner may reinvest surplus revenue in the organization or distribute it for private use.

Once you have decided on the legal structure of the proposed agency, you will need to select a name. The agency's name must be approved by the Department of Community Services, Early Childhood Development Services and the Registry of Joint Stock Companies. Below are a few tips to consider when selecting a potential name:

- Refer to the Directory of Child Care Centres, Early Intervention and Family Day Care Programs, which is available from Early Childhood Development Services to obtain an overview of types of names presently in use, particularly in your area.
- Avoid names beginning with the following words to prevent duplication: ABC, Apple, Busy, Child, Children's, Happy, Kiddie, Learning, Little, and Wee.
- A name which indicates the location of the agency reduces the chances of duplication and is helpful to parents and the community.

Once you have decided on several potential names, call Early Childhood Development Services (902 – 424-5460) for departmental approval. After the department approves your proposed name, you are ready to start the process of registering your organization or business with the Registry of Joint Stock Companies.

Information on how to establish a sole proprietorship, partnership, corporation, or non-profit society can be obtained from:

- Any Access Nova Scotia Centre (see the Blue Pages of your local telephone book)
- Online at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/snsmr/rjsc/register/solep.asp>, or
- Directly from the Registry of Joint Stock Companies

<p>E-mail joint-stocks@gov.ns.ca</p> <p>Telephone <i>Local:</i> (902) 424-7770 <i>Toll-free in Nova Scotia:</i> 1-800-225-8227</p> <p>Fax (902) 424-4633</p>	<p>Mail Registry of Joint Stock Companies P.O.Box 1529 Halifax, NS, B3J 2Y4</p> <p>In Person 9th Floor, Maritime Centre 1505 Barrington Street Halifax, NS, B3J 3K5</p>
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Note: The information in this document relates only to the requirements for licensing a family home day care agency that are set out in the *Day Care Act*, *Day Care Regulations* and *Family Home Day Care Program Regulations*. Each small business or non-profit organization must also follow all other laws and regulations that apply to setting up and running a small business or non-profit enterprise (for example, tax laws, occupational health and safety rules, and municipal by-laws).

Applicants should review the many resources that are available to assist individuals setting up small businesses. These resources are available through Access Nova Scotia Centres and online at the Government of Nova Scotia website: <http://www.gov.ns.ca/snsmr/business/>.

Step 3: ASSESSING COMMUNITY NEED

In order to be licensed as a family home day care agency you must demonstrate that there is a need for your agency and family home day care in a particular community or area of the province. The needs assessment should be done before you invest time finding a specific location to house the agency, and before you do financial forecasting or planning for your program. A needs assessment will help determine what type of child care service, if any, is needed in the community (for example, is there a need or interest in family home day care?). It may also provide you with information on the number of private in-home care providers interested in joining an agency.

To demonstrate the need, we recommend that a community needs assessment survey be undertaken. This survey can be a formal document such as the questionnaire (see sample community needs assessment survey attached as Appendix "D"), which you would mail to families and businesses in the area you want to serve. It may also be beneficial to meet with the representatives of the municipality to determine current and potential business opportunities whose employees will be requiring child care services. As well, contacting carrier colleges and educational institutions in the area may also assist in assessing potential need.

Alternatively, the needs assessment survey could be conducted as a telephone survey or through some other means (e.g. in person, door-to-door). Make sure you modify the sample survey to capture the type of information you need to support the establishment of an agency - e.g. if you want to target private in-home care providers, you would need to make sure the questions are appropriate to gather the information you need.

There are six basic steps in developing and using a child care survey:

1. Define the objectives: Before beginning the survey, have a clear idea of why the survey is being done. What specific information is desired? For example, what type of care is preferred? Who will be surveyed? What will the sample size be? Will information be collected by telephone, by personal interview? Is this information already available elsewhere? The local municipal office may have relevant statistics. Has another group or individual recently conducted a similar survey in the area? What specific use will be made of the findings?
2. Prepare the questions: Construct individual questions to fulfill the objectives. Asking questions to gather information that may seem interesting, but not necessary, only serves to lengthen the survey with the risk of reducing people participation. When composing each question, ask the following: Why am I asking it? What will it tell me? What will I do with the information? Arrange the questions in a logical order, with each leading into the next. Be sure to include clear instructions for the respondent and/or interviewer. It may prove helpful to test the completed survey on a sample group of individuals to ensure that the instructions are clear and the questions are being interpreted the way they were intended to be, so that respondents provide the needed information. If necessary, revise the survey to clarify any misinterpretations that surfaced as a result of the test run.
3. Gather the information through questionnaires and/or interviews: There are several possible survey methods which can be used to collect data.
 - *Personal Interviews:* These are the most costly and time-consuming, but result in the best information. It is important to train the surveyors so that the questionnaire is presented and answers recorded in a uniform manner.
 - *Mailed Questionnaires:* These are less expensive, but have a much lower percentage of returns. Tips to increasing the number of returns include providing a stamped, self-addressed return envelope, an accompanying letter on official letterhead and, if possible, following up the mailing with a reminder telephone call.
 - *Telephone Interviews:* These can also be costly and time-consuming, if you hire someone to complete the survey on your behalf. Telephone interviews are useful for asking in-depth questions on a topic. The telephone may also be used to arrange appointments with personal interviewees who have been difficult to contact.
4. Canvas the community: Inform local community and service organizations of plans for a family home day care agency. Services such as health clinics, home and school associations, social service departments and child care resource centres may be able to assist efforts to notify potential users, and select neighbourhoods and work places for distributing questionnaires.

5. **Evaluate the findings:** The information collected will need to be analysed and put in a suitable format for presentation. Often elaborate statistics are not necessary – reporting total numbers and percentages may suffice. Keep in mind who will be reviewing the results when the findings are completed. Sharing the information with a committee or government body may affect the method of presentation. For example, inclusion of graphs or detailed statistics may be required.
6. **Take action:** The information gathered and analysed may confirm that the proposed service will be a welcome addition to the community, or may lead to a revised plan that will better serve the area, or perhaps indicate that it is not a viable project.

Step 4: CHOOSING A SITE

A major step in planning a family home day care agency is finding a suitable location, whether it is rented or purchased. Below are some considerations when choosing a location:

1. Space needs must be sufficient to deliver the program as described in your agency's business case (see Step 8) and statement of philosophy. For example, if the agency's program philosophy includes considerable parent involvement, space for a parent information centre may be an asset.
2. As well, adequate facilities are needed to address all of the requirements of the family home day care program that are stated in the regulations (e.g. space to hold play groups, house a lending library, and coordinate the overall program.)
3. Agency facilities should also be fully accessible so that parents and children with special needs can be accommodated.

Assistance in locating a building in a specific area may be obtained from real estate agents, boards of education, churches, advertisements, personal contacts and by canvassing the area.

Before signing a lease or purchasing a property:

- Contact the Municipal Planning Office to determine if there are any by-laws, such as zoning or parking, that may affect the operation of the agency;
- Arrange a site approval by the Office of the Fire Marshall, Nova Scotia Department of Environment and Labour, Health Inspector and Early Childhood Development Services; and
- **If you are relying on funding from the Department of Community Services, ensure that you have been approved for funding before entering into any financial or contractual agreements.**

Other factors to consider when choosing a site for a family home day care agency include:

- Is the building attractive from the outside and compatible with other buildings in the neighbourhood, so that the family home day care agency can establish itself as part of the community?
- Is the building in good repair or requiring only minimal renovation to reduce capital costs?
- Does the building have an acceptable water supply as determined by an inspector from the Department of the Environment?
- Does the building have windows to let in natural light?
- If the building is leased, what is the length of the term? This is especially important if you are making a large capital investment.
- If the premises will be shared, investigate any potential drawbacks, such as whether any of the equipment has to be put away at night, whether the place will be left clean after the evening activity, and if the children's work can be displayed.

To help determine the suitability of the neighbourhood:

- Develop a description of the neighbourhood, listing ways in which the area will be appropriate.
- Develop a plan for securing a neighbourhood acceptance of the family home day care agency.
- Consider other public facilities in the area.
- Consider the accessibility of public transportation to the family home day care agency, local public and private schools and other child care facilities, as well as related support services (for example, a library, resource centre, community centre, early intervention program, etc.).
- Evaluate the safety of the area for dropping off and picking up of children and the amount of parking space.

Step 5: COMPLETING THE APPLICATION FORM

You are now ready to start the actual application process. The first document to be prepared is the application form which is included in the application package and is available online at http://www.gov.ns.ca/coms/families/elcc_family_home_day_care.html or through your local office of the Department of Community Services. The application form is self explanatory.

The application form is self explanatory.

Step 6: DEVELOPING THE AGENCY'S PROPOSAL

The application form includes a checklist for a proposal that must be submitted with the application form. A proposal is a document which describes all the key elements of the applicant's program and is submitted in support of the request for a license.

The document should contain sufficient information, facts and supporting information to persuade government that the agency is able to manage a family home day care program effectively. Your proposal should explain the benefits of establishing the agency and show that you have thought through risks or potential problems and have a successful strategy for delivering your program.

Steps 7-16 provide information on how to prepare each aspect of your proposal for a family home day care agency. If you are interested in more general information on proposal writing, go to <http://grants.library.wisc.edu/organizations/proposalwebsites.html> or stop by your local library.

Step 7: DESCRIBING THE PROGRAM AND SERVICES

The first part of the proposal is a description of the program and services that your agency plans to provide, including the child development philosophy on which your program will be based. The philosophy statement which you prepared is under Step 1 will be important in helping you develop this part of the proposal.

Program

The description of the program provided through the agency, and by affiliation, through approved family day care homes, should include items such as information about the learning environment, policies for parent communication and the child development activities /curriculum. This section should explain how the applicant's philosophy will be reflected in agency programs and the programs provided by care providers that are associated with the agency. A healthy learning environment includes play activities that support development of cognitive, physical, language, and social skills. Your proposal should explain how the agency intends to achieve those objectives, keeping in mind the need to ensure an age appropriate environment, materials and resources. See Appendix "F" for additional information on the development of early learning programs.

Services

The regulations require agencies to provide certain services to care providers, including:

- assisting parents and care providers in matching requirements with services,
- providing administrative support and record keeping,
- organizing parent advisory committee meetings,
- providing a lending library,
- providing regular play groups,
- providing or organizing transportation for care providers and children enrolled in its family home day care program to attend agency functions,
- ensuring that agency staff and care providers who provide care to children under its family home day care program have current first aid and infant CPR training from a recognized program approved by the Director, and
- assessing care providers and family day care homes under its management on monthly and annual basis.

This section of the proposal should describe how the above services will be delivered and how the agency plans to recruit and retain care providers.

Step 8: PREPARING A BUSINESS CASE

Using the information gathered during the community needs assessment in Step 3, you will need to develop a business case to support the program you wish to establish.

A business case:

- explains the reasons for establishing a family home day care agency in the area you wish to serve;
- should explain the community need and the expected benefits and risks of setting up the agency; and
- should identify the number of family day care homes the agency plans to manage and how you will develop and expand the agency over time (e.g. a recruitment strategy for acquiring new homes).

Please use the Business Case Template attached as Appendix “E” to present the required information.

Step 9: PREPARING A BUDGET

Closely linked to the business case is the preparation of a one-year operating budget for the agency. As set out in the Terms and Conditions for the Family Home Day Care Program, the Department of Community Services will make operational funding available to licensed agencies. The operational costs will be calculated based on the number of homes that each agency will manage. Applicants should show that the grant is sufficient to cover the operating cost. The budget should align to the business case so that the operational costs will reflect the number of homes the agency plans to manage.

This estimated operating budget must show expected revenues and expenditures to demonstrate that the agency will be financial viable and can establish a normal pattern of operation.

A sample annual operating budget is attached as Appendix “G”.

The Department will also make a small one-time start up grant available to organizations that are licensed to be family home day care agencies to pay for such expenses as advertising, program resources, equipment, legal fees and education for care provider. Applicants should provide information to show that this grant is sufficient to cover their start up costs.

Agencies will be required to provide utilization reports twice per year, 6 months after the license date (within 10 days of the 7th month), and at renewal, to demonstrate that they are following sound financial practices. Information on budgeting and financial management can be obtained

online at <http://www.gov.ns.ca/snsmr/business/starting/> or in-person from any Access Nova Scotia office.

Step 10: DESCRIBING DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Family Home Day Care Program Regulations require that the proposal include a description of the duties and responsibilities of the agency and all staff associated with the family home day care program, including family home consultants and care providers. The regulations also state in various sections the required duties and responsibilities of the agency, family home consultant and care provider. These are the basic duties that must be included in the proposal, however agencies may also add other duties and responsibilities to staff or the agency itself, as considered appropriate.

Appendix “H” provides lists of the duties and responsibilities that are outlined in the regulations for the agency, family home consultant and care provider. The proposal is to use this information as a basic outline of what is required, but must also provide an explanation of how the duties and responsibilities will be carried out.

Some of the information in Appendix “H” is detailed and is to be summarized in your proposal to demonstrate that you understand what is required. For example, the care provider is responsible for ensuring proper nutrition of the children. The regulations provide a number of specific requirements in this area. The proposal should summarize these, or use them as examples of the way the care provider will ensure that the children’s nutrition is being properly managed. The care provider’s handbook (see Step 19, Appendix “Q”), will provide more details of the exact regulated responsibilities.

Your proposal is to also include information on other positions within the agency which will be working within the family home day care program. For example, if you plan to have a person other than the family home consultant coordinate the program, you need to provide that information in this section of the proposal. It is necessary that the role is explained, as well as the responsibilities of that position; and how the duties of the position will be carried out. It is understood that at the time your application and proposal are being prepared, you may not have staff assigned, however as part of the proposal development process you are to have determined how the family home day care program will be delivered and what human resources are needed.

Step 11: PREPARING A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Professional development (learning new skills) occurs throughout one’s career as new information is obtained and practiced on a regular basis. The regulations require you to include a plan for professional development of all members associated with the family home day care program, (including agency staff, family home consultants and care providers).

A professional development plan can take many forms, but is to include some basic information such as the types of knowledge and skills that are required to be developed for each position, and the methods by which this knowledge can be acquired (e.g. training programs, workshops, one-on-one skill modelling etc).

In the field of family home day care, much information has been made available in recent years to assist and support providers. The planning process allows care providers, family home consultants and other agency staff to access the information they require. Each person associated with the family home day care program is an individual with individual strengths, needs and learning styles.

On an annual basis, the agency's plan is to be tailored for each staff person. This work is to be done in conjunction with the individuals involved. Partnering in developing professional development plans allows staff to identify the information that is of most interest and is most useful to them at any one time. Care must be taken to allow plans to be flexible so that any changes in the situation of the staff can be accommodated. This is particularly true of staff new to the field of family home day care.

To assist you in preparing a development plan for care providers and family home consultants, guidelines have been prepared and are included in Appendix "I". If your agency has identified other staff positions to work with the family home day care program (e.g. a coordinator), the development plan must also include information related to training and courses for these positions.

Step 12: DESCRIBING THE FAMILY HOME APPROVAL PROCESS

One of the most important tasks for your agency will be selecting and approving family day care homes to participate in your program. The success of your program will depend on the quality of the family day care homes and the care providers recruited. This section of your proposal is to describe the approach you plan to follow when you are recruiting and approving care providers.

The regulations do not specifically provide an application or approval process for care providers - this is for you to decide - however keep in mind that the simpler the process is, the easier it is to implement and manage. You are to develop your approval process taking into consideration the care providers you are trying to recruit as their level of education will vary. Some may have access to a computer; others may not be computer literate. You want the care providers to see the benefits of joining up with an agency. If the approval process is daunting, then it will be difficult to attract care providers to become part of your family home day care program.

An approval process may include a formal request for approval form to be completed by the care provider, or you could decide to have care providers submit a letter and resume, or choose some other approach to document information on the care provider. A request for approval form clearly spells out for the care providers the information you need; a letter and a resume allow care providers to describe their education and experience in their own words; a process

that is done entirely through interviews requires agency staff to document the care provider's information. Each approach has pros and cons associated with it.

Regardless of how you approach the initial contact, your approval process should include an interview, a review of references and a home visit. As well, the process must ensure that the requirements set out in Section 14 of the Family Home Day Care Program Regulations are met by the care provider. Revocation of approval is set out at Section 15. The particulars of Section 14 and 15, plus some guidelines for the development of an approval process are included in Appendix "J".

Step 13: PREPARING A SAMPLE SERVICE AGREEMENT

A Service Agreement (sometimes referred to as an "SA" or an "SLA") is a legal contract between two parties (e.g. the agency and the care provider), which sets out the roles and responsibilities of each. Service Agreements are used to promote accountability, transparency and consistency and provide a contractual agreement for the delivery of services.

A sample Service Agreement is included as Appendix "K". Each agency should feel free to modify the agreement as required to fit their program requirements. In particular, the individual or specific program requirements and the roles and responsibilities of the care providers and your agency, should be documented in Schedules "A" and "B", attached to the agreement. Because the Service Agreement is a legal contract, it is advisable to have a lawyer prepare or, at a minimum, review the sample Service Agreement you intend to include in your proposal.

Step 14: ANNUAL ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING PROCESS

The regulations require the agency to monitor and support the family day care homes under its management on a monthly and annual basis. The monthly visits by the home consultant provide informal guidance and support to the care providers and also provide the home consultant an opportunity to view the home from a monitoring perspective. This process will ensure that care providers create a safe and healthy environment for the children in their care. Once a year, the agency must do a formal assessment of the care provider's home to ensure that the regulations and guidelines for the program are being followed. The agency's proposal must include a description of how this annual assessment process will be completed, as well as a summary of the information to be gathered during the assessment. For example, the process should describe how the information will be gathered, such as - will the care provider be given a checklist to complete, for review and comment by the family home consultant, or will the family home consultant complete the checklist, or will some other approach be taken? What other steps are included in the annual review process?

Attached as Appendix "L" is a sample assessment form, which could be used by an agency to complete the annual review. Keep in mind that merely including an assessment form will not be sufficient to meet the requirements of this section - the agency must describe the steps involved in the annual assessment process. Another approach would be for the family home consultant

to provide a written report to the agency, documenting the care providers program and status of compliance with the regulations.

Step 15: MAINTAINING CHILDREN'S RECORDS

Agencies must be careful to maintain the confidentiality and accuracy of information contained in the children's records. Records should include enrolment information such as name, date of birth, address, parent's names etc. The detail of what is required in the records is set out in the Day Care regulations, which state:

- 23 (1) Every facility shall keep a register and for each child admitted shall enter therein
- (a) the names and home addresses of the parents or guardian and the child, and the date of birth of the child;
 - (b) the name and address of the child's physician and the person to be notified in case of an emergency, the admission, daily attendance and discharge date for each child.
- (2) Every facility shall keep a record of each child including applications for admission, medical, financial, consent forms from the parents or guardian for emergencies and outings, and such other information as may be required. Records shall remain with the facility for two years following the date the child leaves the facility.

As well, the Day Care regulations include specific requirements related to health and safety records. Section 19(2) states that:

Every facility [which includes agencies] shall establish rules and procedures approved by the local medical health officer and the Minister, respecting regular examination of the children, annual reporting and immunization.

Subsections 6A(1)(c) and (d) of the Day Care regulations apply to agencies and require them to maintain daily records for infants and toddlers which must be available to the parents at the end of each day. The regulations state that records must be kept of:

- (c) Special information such as unusual occurrences and other pertinent information that is not necessarily a daily occurrence;
- (d) Space for the parents to write special instructions or information in respect of their child.

The agency's proposal must include a statement of how the children's records will be maintained. This statement should address the requirements of the regulations, and at a minimum should also address how the agency will maintain confidentiality and accuracy of these records, where the records will be kept, and who will have access to the records.

In the development of the record keeping policy statement, you should also keep in mind that Section 12 of the Family Home Day Care regulations state that a criminal records and child abuse records check must be completed for anyone who may have access to the children's records, either at the agency or in the family day care home.

Step 16: DESCRIBING THE PROPOSED SITE

In Step 4, the applicant identified a proposed site for the location of the agency. As part of the proposal you must include a description of the proposed site for delivering the program. This may include a sketch of the layout, a description of the physical location or photographs of the building and layout, information about accessibility for disabled persons, a description of where the agency will be located in relation to potential family day care homes, etc. As noted in Step 4, the space should be sufficient to accommodate the program requirements (e.g. parental involvement and playgroups) which should also be described in the proposal.

Step 17: SUBMITTING APPLICATION AND PROPOSAL

As described in the Family Home Day Care Terms and Conditions and in the application form itself, the application process for an agency license has been broken down into two parts. The first part is the submission of the application form and the family home day care agency proposal. You have now completed all of the steps required to put together your proposal.

General pointers for preparing a family home day care agency proposal:

- The proposal should be prepared and submitted as one document (e.g. in a 3-ring binder).
- The proposal must include all the items set out under #2 of Appendix "A", but can include additional information or topics if the applicant feels they will add to the proposal.
- Each item or topic should be in a separate section of the proposal (e.g. use dividing tabs).
- A good proposal will include an index, which lists all of the items or topics included in the document. (See Appendix "M" for a sample proposal index)
- Except where a hand drawn sketch is required, the entire proposal should be prepared using a computer. Computers can be accessed through local libraries and Community Access Programs (C@P) sites around the province.

Once you have created your proposal document, submit the proposal together with the signed and completed application form to the nearest regional office of the Department of Community Services. Your application and proposal will be assessed and evaluated as specified in the Terms and Conditions document.

If your proposal receives approval funding pending licensing, you must then be prepared to submit the supplementary information set out in Section III of the application form. (See also

sections 3-8 of Appendix “A” attached). Only applicants that have received funding approval will be asked to submit this information.

Step 18: PREPARING SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

To be complete, the agency’s application for a license must include all of the required supplementary information. Some of the supplementary information is agency policies; some is proof of compliance with other rules, regulations and by-laws. Samples of some of this information are included in the application package and are also available online. Steps 19 to 23 will help you prepare or obtain the required supplementary information.

You may wish to wait to complete the rest of the steps until you hear whether funding approval is confirmed by way of a letter. Alternatively, if you feel confident or are concerned about managing your time to meet submission deadlines, you may wish to get started on the next part of the application process.

Step 19: DEVELOPING AGENCY POLICIES

The regulations required each agency to prepare and submit the following policy documents:

- (i) the agency’s personnel and management policy,
- (ii) the agency’s parent handbook,
- (iii) the agency’s behaviour guidance policy, and
- (iv) the agency’s care provider handbook.

Samples of these documents have been developed and are included as appendices to this guide. These sample policies may be used as guidelines only - you are to develop your own unique policy documents to fit the program being delivered by your agency.

If you are an established child care centre that is fully compliant with the Act and regulations and you are applying to become a licensed family home day care agency, you may be able to use one or more of the above policy documents, which were submitted as part of your application to be licensed as a day care. For example, day care centres are required to submit behaviour guidance policies, so if the one prepared for your day care is suitable for a family home day care agency, you may make reference to it, rather than preparing a new document. The same may hold true for the personnel and management policy and the parent handbook. You should review them carefully to ensure that they contain all of the information your staff and parents will need to interact with the agency.

Personnel and Management Policy

The agency’s personnel and management policy is to provide agency staff and board members (where applicable) with information about agency administrative policies and management structure. These policies are to describe the responsibilities and rights of staff as well as the procedures for dealing with employment issues. They are to also set out board roles and

responsibilities, for any agency that is managed by a board of directors. The policies must comply with any legislation or regulations that set standards or rules regarding the work place. In particular, the policies must comply with the Nova Scotia Labour Standards Code and Regulations and with the Day Care Act, the Day Care Regulations and the Family Home Day Care Program Regulations.

See Appendix “N” to view a sample Personnel and Management Policy.

Parent Handbook

The agency’s parent handbook is to outline the information of which the parents need to be aware during the time their child(ren) is (are) enrolled in the family home day care program. Individual care providers may wish to augment the parent handbook with specific information pertaining to their family day care home. The parent handbook is to be developed in a flexible way to accommodate this type of information. The handbook is to be reviewed with parents when they first enrol their children in the agency’s family home day care program.

See Appendix “O” to view a sample Parent Handbook.

Behaviour Guidance Policy

The Day Care Act and Regulations requires that all day care centres and family home day care agencies have a written policy for staff, care providers and volunteers with respect to permitted and prohibited behaviour guidance practices. The written policy must be reviewed with agency staff, volunteers and care providers prior to employment/approval and again annually to ensure that everyone understands what may and may not be done when managing children’s behaviour. The policy must also be reviewed with the parents of each child when the child is first enrolled in the program.

The regulations describe specific prohibited actions that may not be taken by agency staff, volunteers or care providers when managing and guiding behaviour.

See Appendix “P” for guidelines and background information that will assist you in developing a behaviour guidance policy.

Care Provider Handbook

The agency’s care provider handbook is to outline the information of which the care providers need to be aware to ensure they understand that the Day Care Act and regulations and the Family Home Day Care Program Regulations promote the health, safety and development of children. It can also be used as a resource for care providers.

Below are two resources which may be of assistance to you as you prepare the care provider handbook and build resources to help care providers set up and provide a quality child care:

- *Start and Run A Home Daycare* by Catherine M. Pruisen (Third Edition). Published by Self-Counsel Press.

- *Family Day Care: A Caregiver's Guide - The Most Complete Handbook for Providing Child Care* by Lee Dunster.

See Appendix "Q" to review a sample Care Provider Handbook.

Step 20: AGENCY STAFF

The application package must also include a list of all staff and, if applicable, all board members, who are associated with the family home day care program. This information can be submitted as a separate document. The following information is required for each staff person and board member:

- (i) names,
- (ii) mailing addresses,
- (iii) position titles,
- (iv) information relating to any required professional qualifications.

Step 21: PROOF OF FIRE, HEALTH, SAFETY ETC COMPLIANCE

Proof that the proposed site complies with the regulations, orders and directions of the appropriate authority respecting fire, safety, health and sanitary requirements and any municipal by-laws must also be submitted as part of the application package. It is the agency's responsibility to ensure that it has identified and complies with all additional rules and regulations. Even if the Department of Community Services does not check for compliance with a specific Act, regulation or by-law, all laws must be complied with and agencies must ensure that they are meeting all legal requirements to establish and run their business.

You may wish to consult with a lawyer to ensure that you have identified all of the fire, health, safety, sanitary and municipal by-laws that apply to your agency. To assist you, below is a list of the main departments, agencies, organizations which you may need to contact in order to be fully compliant with the law.

Fire safety: Contact your local fire department or Office of the Provincial Fire Marshal, at the Nova Scotia Environment and Labour. The Fire Marshal has offices province-wide. For information see listing at: <http://www.gov.ns.ca/enla/publicsafety/contact.asp#fmarsh>

Health safety: For information on water safety testing, contact the Department of Agriculture or Nova Scotia Environment and Labour. For rules and procedures respecting regular examination of children, annual reporting and immunization, contact the local medical health officer - see the following website for information: <http://www.gov.ns.ca/hpp/ocmoh/default.htm>

Occupational health and safety: If applicable, contact Nova Scotia Environment and Labour

Zoning and building inspection: Contact your local municipal unit (town, municipality, etc.)

Food safety: Contact the Department of Agriculture regarding requirements for maintaining food safety or regarding food handlers training. See information at:

<http://www.gov.ns.ca/nsaf/foodsafety>

Step 22: PROOF OF INSURANCE

As part of the agency's application for a family home day care agency license, the agency must provide proof of commercial general liability insurance, or a statement satisfactory to the Director from an insurer of an intention to provide the insurance. Information regarding insurance requirements is included in a schedule attached to the sample service agreement, which is set out at Appendix "K". Proof of insurance can be provided by way of a copy of the insurance policy, or by a letter from the insurer. The agency is required to maintain an adequate level of insurance to manage all risks associated with running a family home day care agency. The appropriate level of insurance should be established in conjunction with your insurer.

Step 23: CHILD ABUSE REGISTER AND CRIMINAL RECORD CHECK

Abuse Register Screening

To screen new staff, volunteers and care providers through the Child Abuse Register, contact the ***Child Abuse Register***, Department of Community Service to get the special form needed, **Form XIII Child Abuse Register - Request for a Search**.

The Child Abuse Register is a central record of the names of people who have abused children determined by a Nova Scotia Court. The Child Abuse Register is confidential and can only be used under certain conditions and when certain procedures are followed.

Child Abuse Register screening of agency staff, volunteers and care providers that will be working with or interacting with children or children's records is required. As well, screening is required for any person who is 13 years old or older who resides in a family day care home.

When the agency is applying to be licensed, the agency may not have any staff or care providers in place. In that situation, no checks will be made prior to licensing, however the agency is required to complete Child Abuse Register checks for all staff, volunteers, care providers, and residents of the care provider's home, as soon as they become associated with the agency.

To complete a Child Abuse Register check you must have the written consent of the person whose name you want to screen. A special form must be used, **Form XIII, Child Abuse Register - Request for a Search**. It takes about ten working days from the time that the form is received by the Department of Community Services until the search is completed and the response is sent by registered mail.

The Child Abuse Register is a time-consuming process, so only names of those who have been approved to work with the agency, or reside with an approved care provider should be screened. You are permitted to hire staff and approve care providers on the condition that their names, and the names of their family members, are not on the Child Abuse Register, however this search is to be done immediately and renewed every 3 years. The information must be kept current by the agency.

The law requires that persons be advised when their name is put on the Child Abuse Register. Therefore, it is unlikely that anyone would give their consent for a search of the Child Abuse Register when they are applying to work or seeking approval as a care provider.

Criminal Record Check

Criminal records screening is one factor used to determine the suitability of an applicant who will be working with or providing services to children, youth, or vulnerable adults. The intention is to identify criminal records which may present risk to any of these groups. The regulations require a criminal records check be completed on any care provider, volunteer and staff person who will have contact with the children or their records. As well, a criminal records check must be done for every person 18 or older who lives in the care provider's home.

The criminal record check form can be obtained from the police department in your region.

The agency may require the person whose records are being searched to make the request to the police department and pay whatever fee is associated with having the search completed. Alternatively, the agency may require the person to complete the request form and provide it to the agency, who will then submit it to the police to request the search.

When the police receive a request for a criminal records check, the police review their records to determine whether there was a criminal record and any relevant convictions or outstanding criminal charges. The criminal record check is the property of the person whose record is being searched. This report may be provided by the police directly to the agency, who must return the police record search to the person and shall not make a copy. Alternatively, the police may have a policy of only providing the results of the search to the person whose records are being searched. In this case, the agency must ensure that they have an opportunity to review the results to ensure that the person does not have a criminal record.

The agency must maintain confidentiality with respect to the police record information provided by any staff, volunteer, care provider or other person. The agency shall only use the police record information for the purpose of assessing the person's ability to provide child care services.

Step 24: SUBMITTING THE SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION

Once you have prepared or obtained all of the supplementary information that is required to complete the application for an agency license, the information should be submitted as one package to the DCS regional office where you submitted the application form and proposal.

Please review the Family Home Day Care Terms and Conditions document for information on the approval process and licensing process.