



Rhode Island Department of Human Services

Office of Child Care All Provider Meeting Minutes

December 2, 2019

Arnold Conference Center, Cranston, RI

Introduction – Yvette Mendez, Deputy Director of External Affairs

- Director Courtney Hawkins was sick and was unable to attend; Deputy Director of External Affairs Yvette Mendez introduced the meeting.
- The goal of the meeting was to introduce and support the transition of Child Care Licensing Team from the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) to the Department of Human Services (DHS), share key information for providers to be aware of including updated contacts and upcoming changes, and address any questions and/or concerns directly from providers.
- Interpretation services in Spanish were offered and the presentation PowerPoint will be made available to providers in an email afterwards.

Overview of the Transition – Caitlin Molina, Assistant Director of Child Care

- The goal is to introduce one cohesive child care team (which includes Licensing) at DHS that best serves all children/families– though transitions are not always as smooth as anticipated.
- The Guiding Principles presented in the PowerPoint are intentional and implemented daily by staff – DHS leadership believes providers/customers always come first.
- DCYF licensing staff were given the option to move to DHS with the transition, only leadership (Nicole Chiello moved over). Current status of the licensing team:
 - 3 Licensors hired and trained
 - 1 Implementation Aide who is bi-lingual and bi-cultural
 - 2 more Licensors are in the process of being hired
- The Licensing team's Office Hours mirrors the hours of the Office of Child Care that it is under (MWF from 8:30am-4pm, closed from 12-1pm for lunch). DHS asks for patience from providers and clarity with requests when speaking to the front desk so inquiries can be appropriately directed to the right place. Thank you for your patience as office staff adjusts to the transition.
- DHS commits to always doing the right thing for providers. If providers ever feel like DHS is not doing the right thing for providers, providers are encouraged to reach out with their concern or request. Email is the recommended method of outreach. Licensing's email is: DHS.ChildCareLicensing@dhs.ri.gov
- DHS is committed to solving issues and supporting providers.

Introduction of the New Child Care Licensing Team – Nicole Chiello, Administrator of Family and Children Services, Licensing

- Introduced the 3 new Licensors (Marion Fath, Marta Hawit, and Brigitte Haywood) and Assistant Administrator (Sarah Nardolillo).
- Discussed the new onboarding and training process for licensors, consisting of:
 - 9 hours of classroom training with accompanying materials (which is new; licensors had not previously had specific classroom training around topics such as: child development, regulations, reliability in monitoring);
 - 5 Interreliability visits with select providers to practice monitoring as a group and discuss findings for learning purposes;
 - Shadowing visits with Nicole Chiello.
- Previewed newly revised forms, which once finalized will be posted online:

- Monitoring Form: Aim is to increase transparency and clarify the process for provider and licensors;
- Customer Service Feedback Survey: Post-visit, providers will be asked to complete and provide feedback on the visit- this information will be shared with the Licensing team's leadership and DHS wants to hear from the field;
- Application Cover Letter: Requirements have not changed, the form is being redesigned for ease of use.
- The policies and regulations have not changed with the creation of new forms – the goal is to streamline processes, increase transparency and clarify additional information for providers and licensors.

Legislative Ask – Caitlin Molina

- DHS prioritized a tiered reimbursement model, and the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has asked RI to focus on improving the base rates (1 star) of the tiered model, which are very low.
- DHS cannot independently increase reimbursement rates. This must be done legislatively and voted on by the General Assembly.
- DHS put together a rate increase proposal for Centers; FCC is negotiated by Union, independently.
- This is going to be a phased approach, beginning with the proposed increase of infant/toddler rates to the 25th percentile.
- If providers are unable to deliver quality care because of low CCAP reimbursement rates, their voice needs to be heard at the state level.
- DHS is committed to including a proposed increase of pre-school rates (to the 25th percentile) as well.

Provider Survey and Background Checks – Caitlin Molina

- Purpose of the provider survey was to collect information on experiences and what providers would like to see with transition.
- Related to the provider survey and new Customer Feedback Survey (introduced during the discussion on upcoming new forms), the goal is to capture information from providers and strengthen experiences and relationships with providers and licensors.
 - Collecting data means making more informed decisions – this is helpful in informing operational decisions for the Team. Leadership wants to be aware of providers' experiences with customer service in terms of visits and interactions with licensors.
- Moving forward, the Attorney General's office is now open to serve center based employees with their comprehensive background checks. There is a \$40 fee. (This information was emailed out a week later on December 9, 2019 with the new form that must be used going forward.) DHS is confident that this will improve business and be more efficient. Using the AG's office is highly encouraged, as:
 - For some local precincts, there are lower levels of accuracy, limited hours/availability etc. and
 - The AG's office has high levels of accuracy and meets federal compliance.

Questions and Answers from Attendees – Caitlin Molina and Nicole Chiello

How is transportation included in this reimbursement increase? Can you add a transportation stipend to meet the Department of Transportation (DOT) requirements?

- DHS is committed to supporting and meeting the needs of all RI children and families. Introducing an increase to the CCAP reimbursement rates is a demonstration of our commitment to do so. DHS will continue to work directly with providers to understand the perceived barriers to delivering quality care for children.

For Child Nutrition, only 1 training per year is offered and it is only available in English – the translation does not meet the needs of the provider. It is also hard to meet the budget of implementing the program. It feels like a lot of money goes to the larger program, and it feels like the director and staff of this program set you up for failure. There is a long time between communications and delayed payments. Can DHS take over child nutrition?

- DHS is committed to supporting cross-agency efforts to improve service-delivery to small business owners and non-profits.

Who is going to look at the Customer Service Feedback form?

- The Customer Service Feedback form will go to DHS leadership. When completing the form, there's no need to put the name of a licenser on the form because DHS already has that information on file.

Are forms available to fill out online?

- Monitoring forms will be completed by licensors online via tablet. DHS would like to move toward using technology where it makes sense. For example, if there is a corrective action that can be resolved by emailing a photo, that is sufficient. But for more egregious corrective actions, an additional onsite visit may be required. DHS will be onsite depending on the nature of the violation and provide additional guidance to providers related to this topic.

Regarding the school age rate reimbursement, this is a huge issue and there was no mention of it.

- DHS recognizes the need to increase reimbursement of school age children as part of our commitment to the phased in approach of increasing base rates.

Where do summer camps land under licensing/reimbursement?

- This is a workstream we intend to prioritize over the next year or two. We have heard concerns from providers and are working closely with our community partners to understand the best path forward.

Regarding licensors finishing monitoring reports when they return to the office when it should be completed onsite: How will I get a copy of the form if a licenser completes the form on a tablet? How do we require the licenser completes the form onsite?

- Providers should **never** sign a monitoring report that has not been completed at their facility and/or **gone over with the provider to ensure understanding and clarity**. Licensors will be trained to complete all forms onsite. The monitoring report completed on a tablet can be directly emailed to the provider. Monitoring forms will be reviewed by supervisors prior to posting online, which would be the only time the forms may change (e.g. if leadership needed to remove confidential information in the form before posting); if edits are made, the provider will be notified.

When a license is going to expire, how soon do you want application? Are fees the same?

- The fees and application/renewal time periods remain the same. The fees go into general state revenue, not directly to DHS.

What is the turn-around for processing a new complete application?

- All new (and completed) applications will be processed within 30 days of receipt. Renewals for centers and families, provided everything is included, can occur within days of receipt.

Regarding inconsistency with fire marshals and inspections: Each year, I get a different fire marshal and there's inconsistency. Do we still need a state fire marshal or can it be local? It is time consuming to get them in and to come back once fixes have been made. Should there be designated fire marshal for child care? How/can new fire code (life safety code) be shared with providers?

- DHS doesn't oversee fire marshals, but will follow up to convene a meeting with fire marshals.
- Per licensing requirements, it must be state level fire marshal.
- Related to sharing the new fire code: DHS and LISC to collaborate to see what can be done.
- Erin Cox from LISC: The fire code is updated frequently. She is working with new fire marshals. Fire marshals are considering napping areas as sleeping areas, so they would need carbon monoxide detectors.

Are regulations being reviewed and updated soon?

- Yes, for FCC regulations. This will likely occur sometime in the next 6 months to 1 year and will include a public comment period. Regarding LCC regulations, DHS wants to get licensing finalized prior to proposing any updates to these regulations. This will allow for the collection of data to identify regulations where there are the greatest opportunities for improvement.

Are there still 2 monitoring visits a year?

- Yes, this is part of state regulation. Visits from licensing is not a bad thing. DHS takes this as an opportunity to be onsite to get to know the provider and hopes providers feel the same.

Regarding “Get involved”: There are a lot of DHS staff but it’s disheartening to hear providers need to “get involved.” We don’t feel like we can get through to the right people to get issues resolved. It feels like we don’t have time to do this. Where are the right people to contact?

- This may require an individual meeting to better understand the provider’s individual needs. If you are getting bounced around when submitting an inquiry to DHS, it’s not because we don’t want to help you. We are always willing to meet with you individually and work to resolve any issues.

Request for list of “who to contact with what request”.

- DHS recommends putting all requests via email because it creates a record. For child care licensing matters, email DHS.ChildCareLicensing@dhs.ri.gov. For all other Office of Child Care matters, email DHS.ChildCare@dhs.ri.gov.

Thank you for sending the message of transparency and an open door policy. It was needed because FCC providers felt it was punitive. I’m hearing respect, collaboration, and pathways of technical assistance. I have a concern around the monitoring report being posted online and the timeline for correcting non-compliances, when are violations being removed?

- Any corrective action will have a clear timeline and DHS is committed to sharing this with providers. In the 100 day action plan, only the high risk regulations will be prioritized for corrective action. DHS is committed to meeting the ACF mandate to have monitoring forms posted.
- We need to educate parents on what a monitoring form does. DHS is working with PD/TA on how to educate families and providers on the purpose of posting the monitoring forms and noting the non-compliances and their correction. DHS has introduced functionality so that online forms can be edited as corrective actions are rectified.

Family Child Care Provider: I never received my renewal application.

- FCC renewal packets are still sent out by mail; if you haven’t received it yet, email the Licensing team at: DHS.ChildCareLicensing@dhs.ri.gov For center providers, continue to use the application form on ECEDs.

Is it possible to set up professional development opportunities related to compliance – i.e. clarifications of regulations?

- DHS is looking at this in a two-fold manner:
 - Creating guidance document(s) and distributing to providers
 - Implementing the 100 Day Action Plan and seeing where concerns lie and how to best address/resolve
- DHS also revisiting the Health and safety trainings. RIELDS will be available online on the CELP website in January 2020.

Regarding monitoring reports: In other states, corrective action is tiered so a parent can identify the level of risk of that item.

- DHS is currently reviewing at this topic and how to implement.