

Starting a Child Care Program

DETERMINE IF YOUR PROGRAM NEEDS TO BE LICENSED

If you are thinking about starting an after school program, the very first thing you need to do is determine if you will need a license from the State.

The exemption categories are as follows:

1. You plan not to charge a fee of any kind for your program.
2. Your program will be operated by a local school on school property.
3. You plan to operate a drop-in program where children are free to come and go without escort of parents or some responsible person.
4. Your program will be a day or summer camp program with a primary emphasis on recreation which will operate between school terms.

If you believe you may not to be subject to licensure, **you must apply to the Applicant Services Unit of the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning, Bright From the Start, for exemption.** Click here to access the exemption request form and the list of other documents needed for the request

<http://www.decal.state.ga.us/CCS/CCSServices.aspx?Header=19&SubHeader=167&Position=8&HeaderName=Rules%20and%20Regulations>

Or you can go to the Bright from the Start website: www.decal.state.ga.us

SECURING A LICENSE

STEP ONE - If you are subject to licensure, you must contact The Applicant Services Unit (ASU) of Bright from the Start, the Georgia Department of Early care and Learning which is responsible for the initial licensing of new programs in the State of Georgia. Applicants must obtain the licensing packet and attend an orientation class prior to submitting an application for licensure. Click here to get the licensure packet <http://www.decal.state.ga.us/CCS/CCSServices.aspx?Header=58&SubHeader=&Position=16&HeaderName=Application%20Packets>

Licensure Orientation Meetings are conducted monthly and although there is no charge to attend, you must pre-register. You may obtain a licensing packet from your local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency (CCRR). Click here to find your local CCRR. <http://www.gaccrra.org/contact.html>

Contact Bright from the Start at 404-657-5562 to pre-register for the orientation meetings.

If you are interested in the licensure process and are not ready to submit an application, you can attend a General Information Session. This session will not, however, substitute for the required Licensure Orientation Meeting (LOM). No registration is required. Click here to access the dates, times, and locations for these sessions offered from Bright from the Start.

<http://www.decal.state.ga.us/CCS/CCSServices.aspx?Header=18&SubHeader=183&Position=6&HeaderName=Training%20Opportunities>

STEP TWO - Prior to the issuance of an initial license, the Director of the new after school program must register with Bright from the Start to attend a 40-hour director's training course. Click here for a current listing of state-approved trainers or see the Bright from the Start website.

<http://www.decal.state.ga.us/CCS/CCSServices.aspx?Header=17&SubHeader=&Position=4&HeaderName=Starting%20a%20Child%20Care%20Program>

SIMULTANEOUSLY PREPARE YOUR SPACE

- **CONTACT THE LOCAL ZONING OFFICE** - Licensure also requires a letter from your local zoning office stating the current zoning for your program's building. You will need to get this letter while you are going through the steps for securing a license. Current zoning may or may not allow for a school age program in the building or on the lot you have selected. You will need the letter from the zoning office along with a sketch (or architect's drawings) of the proposed space (or building) to submit to Bright from the Start. After your plans have been approved by Bright from the Start, you may renovate or build your facility.

- **SET UP VISITS WITH LOCAL FIRE & BUILDING INSPECTORS** - If your program will be in an existing building, you will also need to arrange a visit with your fire and building inspectors. Local building and fire codes may vary from licensure standards and renovations might be necessary to comply with either or both.

- **DEVELOP AN OPERATION PLAN**

An Operation Plan must also be submitted to Bright from the Start. Included in this plan should be the services you propose, policies, records, equipment, and health and safety guidelines for your program.

SUBMISSION OF AN APPLICATION FOR A LICENSE

Once you have secured your zoning paperwork, your fire and building code inspections are completed and approved, you may submit the Application for License and a Readiness statement to the Applicant Services Unit of Bright from the Start.

PROCESS CRIMINAL RECORDS FOR ALL STAFF/VOLUNTEERS

Several months before you open your program, you will want to begin the criminal records check process. All personnel who have contact with children, including volunteers, must have a clean criminal records check on file. A license cannot be issued until the Director has obtained a satisfactory preliminary records check and a criminal records check application has been submitted to Bright From the Start for all other staff. A criminal records check can take up to several weeks and the fingerprint check required of the Director may take longer. Click here

<http://www.decal.state.ga.us/CCS/CCSServices.aspx?Header=21&SubHeader=69&Position=12&HeaderName=Provider%20Resources>

to get more information and forms on criminal records checks from the Bright from the Start website.

PREPARE FOR ON-SITE INSPECTION

Once you have submitted all required paperwork to the Applicant Services Unit, you may want to prepare for the final inspection visit. You will need to set up your program space to display how you will have the area ready for children. Post schedules and activity plans; set up all equipment and materials; store non-perishable food in a secure place. If the program is deemed in compliance on the day of the visit, a temporary license will be issued and mailed to you.

Annual visits are conducted to insure compliance with the licensing regulations.

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