



Professionalism / Licensing and Accreditation

Licensing vs. Accreditation (II)



Dear Debi,

I recently moved to a large city and offer child care in my home. The parents keep asking me if I'm licensed or if I have accreditation. I provide excellent care and have been doing so for years. Do I need to get a license to work in my home?

– **Annie**, Pasadena, CA

Debi's Tips



Debi Gutierrez

Host

- A license is required if you are taking care of more than one family's children (other than your own)
- Accreditation is voluntary
- The state issues licenses
- The National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) offers accreditation
- Licensing focuses on health, safety & nutrition
- Accreditation focuses on quality of programs

Expert Advice



Jocelyn Tucker

Board Member, National Association for Family Child Care

Licensing is not a difficult process at all. Licensing requires meeting the minimum state health and safety requirements to run a family home care. The state requires you to have a license if you are caring for more than one family's children (other than your own).

To get a license in California, you pay a fee and attend an orientation. The state program sends out an analyst to do a safety inspection of your home to make sure it meets the minimum safety requirement to run a child care. If you pass the inspection and are CPR certified, then you just need a fingerprint background check and a TB test.

The difference between accreditation and licensing is that the state governs licensing, while the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) does the accrediting in California. Accreditation is completely voluntary and the standards for accreditation exceed the minimum requirements for licensing.

There are five areas that accreditation focuses on: routine, relationships, learning activities, environments and business practices. The accreditation process helps you reach the highest quality in all of these areas and, in return, you'll know that you are running the highest quality early childhood program possible for the children in your care.

The accreditation process is a gradual one. Most providers do the self-study accreditation process in about nine months to a year. You aren't required to attend any classes – it's all done at your own pace. While you don't have to go to class, you can get together with other providers in a group and help each other.

There is a fee of about \$500, which will give you all the materials you will need to get through the process. Once you've completed 90 hours of professional development and training, an observer is called to your program for a day to make sure you are meeting all the standards. A report is submitted for approval of accreditation. The accreditation is good for 3 years.

There are resources out there to help child care providers become licensed and accredited. The NAFCC gives accreditation scholarships based on income, but there are many local agencies that assist in financing licensing and accreditation. It's just a matter of finding them out there.

Child Care provider Comments



Yvonne

Family child care provider for 4 years

There are many advantages for getting licensed. Two that come to mind are the support groups and the federal funding that you can get. The problem is that there is a lot of misinformation out there and people get scared; they think it is too complicated and they immediately erase it as a possibility for them.



Darlene

Family child care provider for 4 years

My accreditation process was a little lengthy, but I did it at my own pace. The process is broken down into specific steps that insure that you can provide quality care. I had to make sure, for example, that my environment met all the requirements. Is the child care print rich?

Is there diversity within the program? Are the menus posted? Do I have appropriate bulletin boards for the parents and the kids? By learning and applying all these changes into my child care, I enriched my program and raised the quality of the child care, not only for the kids but also for their parents.



Ginny

Family child care provider for 14 years

When I was licensed, I felt I was providing good quality care to my children, but accreditation took it a step further. It clearly lets parents know that they are getting the best for their money and that their children are part of a serious and competent program.

There is also a personal reward that comes with accreditation, and that is, self-confidence and the awareness that you have reached the apex of your professional career.

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