

Prior law provided for licensing of child-placing agencies, community homes, day care centers, group homes, maternity homes, and residential homes with Class A and Class B licenses.

New law provides for licensing of child-placing agencies, community homes, child day care centers, group homes, maternity homes, and residential homes with Type I, II and III licenses.

New law provides for the definition of camp and child day care center.

New law defines a "specialized provider" as a child-placing agency, maternity home, or residential home.

New law defines a "Type I license" as a license held by a child day care center or residential home that is owned or operated by a church or religious organization that does not wish to be licensed as a Type II, Type III or Type IV center. "Type I license" also means a license held by a child day care center or residential home holding a Class B license prior to the effective date of the new law.

Provides that "Type I license" provisions not be construed to require licensure of a children's religious program operated by a church or religious organization which is qualified as a tax-exempt organization and which remains open for not more than 24 hours in a continuous seven-day week and in which no individual child remains for more than 24 hours in one continuous stay.

New law defines a "Type II license" as a license held by a privately-owned child day care center that either receives no state or federal funds from any source, whether directly or indirectly, or whose only source of state or federal funds is the federal food and nutrition program.

New law defines a "Type III license" as a license held by any publicly or privately owned early childhood learning center which receives state or federal funds, directly or indirectly, from any source other than the federal food and nutrition program. Requires that Type III early childhood learning centers meet the performance and academic standards of the Early Childhood Care and Education Network regarding kindergarten readiness, as determined by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

New law defines "Type IV license" as the license held by any publicly or privately owned specialized provider.

New law requires the department to create an early childhood learning working group to provide input in developing rules and regulations to establish Type I, Type II and Type III licenses. Requires that the working group be dissolved on the effective date of any law transferring authority for licensing child day care centers from the Department of Children and Family Services to the Department of Education.

New law provides that all existing child day care centers or residential homes possessing a Class B license will be issued a Type I license.

New law provides that all child day care centers that meet the definition for a Type II license pursuant to new law shall be issued a Type II license.

New law provides any child day care center possessing a Class A license on the effective date of the new law that meets the definition of Type II license pursuant to new law shall be issued a Type II license.

New law provides that all existing childhood learning centers that meet the definition for a Type III license pursuant to new law shall be issued a Type III license as provided by rule.

New law provides that all existing child-placing agencies, maternity homes, and residential homes that meet the definition for a Type IV license pursuant to new law shall be issued a Type IV license.

New law provides any maternity home, residential home, or child-placing agency possessing a Class A license upon the effective date of the new law that meets the definition of a Type IV license pursuant to new law shall be issued a Type IV license.

New law provides any early childhood learning center requesting to change its license type shall apply with the department no later than December first of the preceding year.

New law provides that all applicable fees provided for in prior law remain in effect. Exempts from fees any Type I child day care center owned or operated by a church or religious organization.

New law requires the department to promulgate regulations for each category and type of license to carry out the provisions of new law in accordance with the provisions of the APA. Requires that the department seek input and guidance from the Louisiana Advisory Council on Child Care and Early Education concerning the proposed rules and regulations for approval of Type I, Type II and Type III facilities in accordance with the APA.

The regulations developed by the department, at a minimum, shall:

- (1) Promote the health, safety, and welfare of children attending any facility.
- (2) Promote safe, comfortable, and proper physical facilities.
- (3) Ensure adequate supervision of those attending facilities by capable, qualified, and healthy personnel.
- (4) Ensure adequate and healthy food service in facilities where food is offered.
- (5) Prohibit discrimination by early childhood learning centers and specialized providers on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, handicap, ancestry, or whether the child is being breast-fed. Provides that this not be construed to affect, limit, or otherwise restrict the hiring or admission policies of a licensed day care center owned by a church or religious organization, which may give preference in hiring or admission to members of the church or denomination nor restrict the rights of religious sectarian child-placing agencies to consider creed in any decision or action relating to foster care or adoption.
- (6) Require providers to have a written description of admission policies and criteria which expresses the needs, problems, situations, or patterns best addressed by its program. Requires that these policies be available to the person legally responsible for any child referred for placement.
- (7) Include procedures by which parents and guardians are given an opportunity for consultation and information about the educational and therapeutic programs for the child in attendance.
- (8) Include regulations and standards for nighttime care.
- (9) Include procedures for the receipt, recordation, and disposition of complaints.
- (10) Include procedures for the child's return to the parents. Requires that arrangements for the child's return to the parent not include third parties or other child-care agencies unless written agreement between the child-care agency and the parent is on file with the child care agency.
- (11) Include procedures that allow an early childhood learning center to remedy certain deficiencies immediately upon identification by the department in an onsite inspection, provided that any deficiency that may be remedied in such manner does not constitute a critical violation of licensing standards as determined by the department.

New law requires any entity approved by the department to do the following:

- (1) Gain approval from the office of state fire marshal.
- (2) Gain approval from the office of public health.
- (3) Adhere by Type III early childhood learning centers to the performance and academic standards of the Early Childhood Care and Education Network regarding kindergarten readiness as determined by BESE. The Department of Education shall base its approval upon the uniform accountability system.

New law provides no facility holding a Type I license shall receive any state or federal funds, from any source, whether directly or indirectly. If a facility holding a Type I license receives any state or federal funds, its license shall be automatically revoked.

New law requires that no facility holding a Type II license shall receive any state or federal funds, from any source, whether directly or indirectly, other than those received solely for food and nutrition. If a facility holding a Type II license receives any state or federal funds, whether directly or indirectly, other than those received solely for food and nutrition, its license or authorization certificate shall be automatically revoked.

New law requires the department to prepare standard forms for applications and for inspection reports.

New law requires a comprehensive review of all standards, rules, and regulations for all licenses shall be made at least every three years by the department.

New law allows the department secretary, in specific instances, to waive compliance with a minimum standard upon determination that the economic impact is sufficiently great to make compliance impractical, as long as the health and well-being of the staff or children is not imperiled. If it is determined that the facility or agency is meeting or exceeding the intent of a standard or regulation, the standard or regulation may be deemed to be met.

New law provides discrimination by child-care facilities and child-placing agencies on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, disability as defined by law, ancestry, or whether the child is being breast-fed is prohibited. Requires that new law not restrict the hiring or admission policies of a church or religious organization, which may give presence in hiring or admission to members of the church or denomination.

New law prohibits the department from regulating or attempting to regulate or control the religious or spiritual content of the curriculum of a school or facility sponsored by a church or religious organization.

New law provides that nothing in the rules, regulations, and standards adopted pursuant to new law shall authorize or require medical examination, immunization, or treatment of any child whose parents object to such examination, immunization, or treatment on religious grounds.

New law requires that every facility have a written discipline policy, which shall be made available to parents and to authorized inspection personnel upon request.

Authorizes the department to seek judicial review of any final decision or order by the division of administrative law in any appeal hearing arising under new law. Requires that venue for this judicial review be in the parish in which the licensee is located.

Effective January 1, 2014.

(Amends R.S. 46:1403, 1404(A), 1405, 1415, 1419-1422, 1425(A) and (B), 1426, 1428(A), and 1429; adds R.S. 46:1406-1407; and repeals R.S. 46:1408, 1409, 1412, 1413, and 1424)