

**CHILD CARE REFERRAL POLICY  
WHITE RIVER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT, INC.  
CHILDREN OF NORTHCENTRAL ARKANSAS**

1. CHILDREN of Northcentral Arkansas (hereafter referred to as CHILDREN) believes parents are best able to evaluate and choose child care for their children because they are in the best position to evaluate their child(ren)'s needs. Our goals are to assist parents in locating a variety of providers who meet their criteria, apprise parents of ways to assess quality, and encourage parents as they choose among the available alternatives.

**Responsibility for selecting and employing a childcare provider rests with each parent. We do not recommend nor do we guarantee quality of providers listed with CHILDREN. We urge every parent to check references and carefully interview providers before making a final decision. Every provider listed in CHILDREN's database is licensed or registered with the State of Arkansas.**

2. CHILDREN lists and makes referrals to providers who are currently licensed or registered by the State of Arkansas. Being licensed means that the provider has met minimum standards of safety and quality as established by the state. Licensed facilities include centers or family childcare homes. A registered facility is a family childcare home providing care for no more than five children from more than one family and complies with the rules for Family Child Care Home Voluntary Registration of the Arkansas Department of Human Services.
3. The Child Care Licensing Unit issues provisional licenses and registration certificates to new child care facilities. Early in the provisional process, some providers may not have actually completed the criminal background or child abuse and neglect central registry checks, but have completed the paperwork for these to be processed. These new facilities will be included in the referral database upon receipt of the provisional license or registration certificate. Staff will inform parents during their referral telephone call about the differences in a provisional and regular license or registration certificate. Profiles of referred facilities, which are mailed to parents, will also reflect a PROVISIONAL facility.
4. CHILDREN reserves the right to refuse listing of providers if any of the following conditions exist:
  - < unsubstantiated allegations of abuse and/or neglect.
  - < discrimination.
  - < a program is under investigation for serious licensure non-compliance.
  - < a child care facility that is **not** licensed or registered by the Arkansas Department of Human Services.
  - < adverse action has been taken against a childcare facility.
  - < pattern of high child turnover rate under normal circumstances
  - < repeated complaints or incidences are documented by CHILDREN staff. After three (3) complaints are received or incidences documented concerning a provider or facility, the file will be reviewed by the Program Director and the Complaint Policy Committee of the Advisory Council to discuss what, if any, action should be taken.

**No provider has the absolute right to be listed with CHILDREN.**

We encourage families and providers to become familiar with referral and complaint policies and to inform us of conditions and/or practices that cause concern. Parent observation and feedback are essential in the promotion of quality childcare.

This policy is subject to periodic review and revision by the Advisory Council of CHILDREN of Northcentral Arkansas.

July 31, 2003 Revised

**WHITE RIVER PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT, INC.  
CHILDREN OF NORTHCENTRAL ARKANSAS**

**Complaint Policy Overview and Process**

**OVERVIEW**

A parent who is dissatisfied with a caregiver may call CHILDREN of Northcentral Arkansas (hereafter referred to as CHILDREN) to register a complaint. The Referral Advisor or Program Director (whoever answers the call) must be prepared to talk with the parent about his/her concerns, maintaining a position of respect for the parent's rights and responsibilities in this matter. In addition, the Referral Advisor or Program Director must provide objective counsel to the complainant and not form a judgment about the child care provider or program being discussed.

Some difficulties between parents and providers can be worked out over a period of time through communication. Accordingly, a complainant is provided with suggestions on how to approach the caregiver or center director, when appropriate. If the parent calling CHILDREN with the concern feels that there has been a violation of a regulatory standard, the Referral Advisor's or Program Director's role in these situations becomes one of encouraging the parent to report the violation to the appropriate authority, and providing him/her with the name and phone number of the person(s) to whom complaints should be addressed.

CHILDREN's Complaint Policy categorizes complaints according to the perceived seriousness of the threat to the health, safety, or welfare of the child. The three types of complaints recognized are: **1) Serious Complaints, 2) Less Serious Complaints Involving Violation, and 3) Less Serious Complaints - No Violation.** The Referral Advisor must determine the category in which the concern falls during or immediately after the conversation with the parent. He/she then completes a Complaint Form, initiates the process for temporarily stopping referrals to the provider or program by CHILDREN, when necessary, and informs the Program Director of the action.

When a **Serious Complaint Involving Violation** is received, referrals to the facility cease with a Temporary Hold placed on the facility. The CHILDREN Program Director has the responsibility of approving or rescinding the Temporary Hold status, based on the perceived seriousness of the violation. When the situation warrants, the facility's record may remain on Temporary Hold until the next meeting of the Complaint Policy Committee. During the interim, the Program Director contacts the Department of Human Services' Child Maltreatment Hotline, or appropriate licensing specialist concerning the alleged violation. The Complaint Policy Committee reviews the case at its meeting and, based on the results of the Department of Human Services' or licensing specialist's investigation, recommends removal of the facility from referral, extension of the Temporary Hold status, or reinstatement. The caregiver or Program Director is then informed of the Complaint Policy Committee's decision. Providers removed from the referral files may appeal that decision through CHILDREN's Advisory Council.

For complaints falling in either of the other two categories, the Program Director of CHILDREN determines whether the Department of Human Services will be notified. The Advisory Council receives statistical information on each complaint at its regularly scheduled meeting.

## COMPLAINT POLICY

Any complaint made to CHILDREN of Northcentral Arkansas (hereafter referred to as CHILDREN) about child care providers/facilities will be recorded.

In an effort to protect an individual's rights of confidentiality, each caller is given the opportunity to remain anonymous, if they so desire.

Types of Complaints:

- A. **Less Serious Complaints - No Violations:** complaints which do not involve violations of child care regulations; complaints about situations which do not pose a threat to the safety, health or welfare of a child (e.g. financial arrangements between parents and provider, communications problems between parents and provider, differences of philosophy on child rearing practices, etc.).
  
- B. **Less Serious Complaints Involving Violation:** complaints of any violation of the Health Department, city codes, and/or the State Licensing Department regulations which do not constitute a serious violation as defined by this policy.
  
- C. **Serious Complaints:** any threat to the immediate health, safety, or welfare of a child, such as:
  - 1. Complaints that the physical environment of the home or center poses an immediate threat to the child;
  - 2. Complaints of physical abuse;
  - 3. Complaints of neglect;
  - 4. Complaints of sexual abuse and/or assault;
  - 5. Complaints of inappropriate punishment, as defined by the Arkansas Department of Human Services (ADHS) Licensing regulations;
  - 6. Complaints that child(ren) have been left alone without the supervision of an adult;
  - 7. Complaints that the provider is impaired due to emotional disturbance or drug or alcohol abuse while caring for child(ren);
  - 8. Complaints that a child has been subjected to treatment injurious to his/her physical and/or emotional health.

Any complaints received involving physical or sexual abuse or neglect must be reported to the Child Maltreatment Hotline at 1-800-482-5964.

## Procedure

The caller will be advised to make complaints about the care of children directly to the Child Maltreatment Hotline. The CHILDREN Program Director and/or staff will also contact the Child Maltreatment Hotline to advise the Department of Human Services of the complaint. The Arkansas Department of Human Services begins the investigation within 72 hours unless the complaint is severe physical or sexual abuse, then the investigation will occur within 24 hours. ADHS is requested to notify CHILDREN of the results of the investigation.

## Complaint Process

*Step 1:* The Referral Advisor receives a call complaining about a family day care provider/center.

*Step 2:* The Referral Advisor fills out a Complaint Form while on the telephone.

*Step 3:* The Referral Advisor asks the complainant to report the violation to the Child Maltreatment Hotline or the licensing unit, whichever is applicable. The complainant is advised to telephone and/or to put the complaint in writing. The Referral Advisor gives the complainant the name, address, and telephone number of the Child Maltreatment Hotline or applicable licensing unit.

*Step 4:* The Program Director evaluates seriousness of the complaint. The complaint is designated to be a **Serious Complaint**, a **Less Serious Complaint Involving a Violation**, or a **Less Serious Complaint - No Violation**.

*Step 5:* The following steps are taken for each complaint:

**Serious Complaints** - Complaints of any violation of the Arkansas Department of Human Services, Child Care Licensing Division, which constitutes a serious violation as defined by this policy.

1. The Advisor places the caregiver/facility on Temporary Hold.
2. The Referral Advisor immediately (i.e., within the same day) informs the Program Director of the complaint.
3. The Program Director reports the complaint to the Child Maltreatment Hotline the same day the complaint is received.
4. The Program Director makes a decision within twenty-four (24) hours of the complaint to rescind

the Temporary Hold or keep it in place.

5. Temporary Hold is rescinded or deleted from computer database.
6. CHILDREN's Complaint Policy Committee reviews the serious complaint and, based upon the results of the Department of Human Services' investigation, recommends permanent removal of caregiver/facility from referral, extension of Temporary Hold, or reinstatement.
7. The Program Director informs the provider/facility of CHILDREN'S Complaint Policy Committee's decision within two (2) days.
8. The Complaint Policy Committee presents a report on their decision at the next quarterly Advisory Council meeting.

**Less Serious Complaints Involving Violation** - Complaints of any violation of Health Department, Fire Department, city codes or Department of Human Services which does not constitute a serious violation.

1. The Referral Advisor immediately informs the Program Director of the complaint.
2. The Program Director evaluates the complaint within twenty-four (24) hours. If the Program Director thinks the complaint is a **Serious Complaint**, he/she informs the Referral Advisor and implements **Serious Complaint** Procedures.

**OR**

3. The Program Director agrees that the complaint is a **Less Serious Complaint Involving Violation** and immediately informs the proper agency by telephone or letter.
4. Statistical information on the complaint is entered into the computer.
5. The Program Director prepares documentation for review by the Advisory Council at its regularly scheduled meeting.

**Less Serious Complaints - No Violation** - Complaints which do not involve violations or pose a threat to the health, safety, or welfare of a child.

1. The Referral Advisor evaluates the complaint and informs the Program Director. If the Program Director determines the complaint is **Serious** or **Less Serious Involving Violation**, procedures listed under these categories are followed.

2. The Program Director agrees that the complaint is **Less Serious - No Violation**.
3. Statistical data on complaint is entered into the computer.
4. The Program Director prepares documentation for review by CHILDREN's Advisory Council at its regularly scheduled meeting.

### **Suspension**

Within ten (10) working days of the determination, the provider shall be notified of the removal from the referral list by certified mail. This letter shall include (1) reason for suspension and 2) copies of any documentation. (Notice may be delayed if there is reason to believe it could interfere with an official investigation by a government agency.)

The provider shall be immediately removed from the referral list and all CHILDREN personnel shall be made aware of this action. No information shall be made public. Inquiries concerning the provider shall be answered only by saying, "the provider is not included on the referral list."

### **Appeals**

Appeals of the decision to cease referrals are directed to CHILDREN's Program Director. A provider may appeal a decision to CHILDREN's Advisory Council by mailing a written notice of appeal to the Program Director within five (5) working days of receipt of removal notice.

The review committee shall hear an appeal within thirty (30) working days of receipt of written appeal notice. Written notice of place, date, and time of appeal hearing shall be mailed to the provider who may appear to make a presentation to the Committee.

The Committee shall consider statements by interested parties and any pertinent documents presented by them. Decision will be by majority vote within ten (10) working days of the hearing. Formal rules of evidence shall not govern the conduct of the hearing, but the Committee will exclude repetitions or irrelevant evidence at its discretion. The decision may be to affirm removal, to reinstate, or to reinstate with conditions as the Committee deems appropriate. The decision shall be communicated to the provider in writing within ten (10) working days by certified mail.