

# DON'T BE IN THE DARK ABOUT CHILD CARE

Nearly one-half of child care centers in Alabama are **uninspected** and **unregulated**.

## CHILD CARE IN ALABAMA

- Alabama is one of only seven states that allows child care programs to legally operate without a license or inspection.
- Alabama's dual system of child care includes licensed child care that is annually inspected by the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) and exempt child care that is not licensed or inspected by DHR.
- The licensing process includes a trained professional annually inspecting a child care program for compliance with the health & safety standards outlined in Alabama's *Minimum Standards for Day Care Centers and Nighttime Centers*.
- Programs can claim exemption from licensing and inspections if they operate as part of a church-based elementary school or are an integral part of a church ministry, care for children for four hours or less per day, or are operated by another governmental agency such as a public school or military base.
- A child care license does not prevent a child care program from teaching religious concepts. There are many faith-based child care programs in Alabama that choose to be licensed for health & safety standards.
- When some programs don't have to maintain minimum standards, all programs face pressure to cut corners. In recent years, the number of unlicensed child care programs has continued to increase, while the number of licensed programs has continued to decline.
- As of August 2016, there were 944 exempt child care centers and 1,020 licensed child care centers operating in Alabama.

References: Child Care Aware, Alabama Department of Human Resources: [http://www.dhr.state.al.us/daycare/daycare\\_search.aspx](http://www.dhr.state.al.us/daycare/daycare_search.aspx), and Minimum Standards for Day Care Centers and Nighttime Centers: [http://www.dhr.state.al.us/documents/MinimumStandards\\_DayCare.pdf](http://www.dhr.state.al.us/documents/MinimumStandards_DayCare.pdf)

### Alabama's Minimum Standards

- ✓ Prior to receiving a license, the child care facility must submit a written fire and health department inspection report and zoning approval.
- ✓ All staff working in a licensed child care program are required to have a criminal background check and clearance from the State Central Registry for Child Abuse/Neglect.
- ✓ Teachers must have at least a high school diploma or GED and at least 12 clock hours of training in child care and development each year.
- ✓ The director should obtain at least 24 hours of training each year.
- ✓ Written documentation of a current infant-child First Aid and CPR certificate should be on file for at least one staff present at the center during hours of operation.
- ✓ A plan for the evacuation and care of the children in case of a fire, tornado, serious accident or injury, or power failure.
- ✓ Child care programs cannot exceed the following staff-to-child ratios:
  - 0 – 18 months = 1 to 5
  - 18 months – 2 ½ years = 1 to 7
  - 24 months – 36 months = 1 to 8
  - 2 ½ years – 4 years = 1 to 11
  - 4 years – school age = 1 to 18

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*Don't Be In The Dark About Child Care is a partnership campaign between the Alabama Partnership for Children and VOICES for Alabama's Children.*