Posting of Child Care Licensing Information

Office of the Inspector General
Licensing Division

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Plain Language Summary:
Guidelines for the Posting of Child Care Licensing Information

The Department of Human Services is required to develop guidelines for how we display public licensing information for child care providers. The Department has displayed public licensing information on all DHS-licensed programs since 2010 on Licensing Information Lookup (https://licensinglookup.dhs.state.mn.us/). Below are answers to questions about the guidelines document and changes to the Licensing Information Lookup.

What is in the guidelines document?
The guidelines describe the way public licensing information for child care programs is currently displayed on our website. It explains the changes and improvements we are making and when they will take effect. It also summarizes the stakeholder input we received before making the changes.

Why are these changes being made?
We made these changes to meet several new posting requirements in federal law and to respond to provider feedback about how public information is displayed on our website. The changes are similar to how other states display child care licensing information. The changes also support our goal to provide information about child care programs in a plain language, easy to understand format.

These guidelines are meant to:
- increase transparency for families and members of the public searching for and using licensed child care;
- promote high-quality, healthy, and safe child care; and
- support existing licensed child care providers by providing clear, accurate, and objective information about their licensing compliance.

What is changing?
Licensing information will be displayed on our website, including:
- the date of visit;
- type of visit (e.g., licensing review, licensing investigation, etc.);
- whether violations are found during the visit; and
- how a violation is corrected, including when a violation is corrected “on-site” or appealed.

Are there other changes?
Yes. Other changes include:
- Licensing actions will no longer be labeled as a “Negative Action.” The document will be labeled with the specific name of the licensing action taken (e.g., Fine Order, Conditional License, License Revocation, etc.).
- Licensing information, licensing actions, and maltreatment investigation documents will only be posted to Licensing Information Lookup for four years.
- Documents posted more than four years ago will be removed from Licensing Information Lookup, but will continue to be available to the public if requested.

When will these changes take effect?
The licensing information will be added for family child care programs in May 2018 and for child care centers in December 2018. Until the changes take effect for child care centers, correction order documents will continue to be posted on Licensing Information Lookup.

November 2018 Revision:
On page 7, we removed an asterisk to clarify that Fix-it tickets are not considered public information and cannot be provided to members of the public, even in response to a data request.
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I. Legislation

The statutory language requiring these guidelines are as follows:

S.F. 2, Article 7, Section 35

No later than November 1, 2017, the commissioner shall develop guidelines for posting public licensing data for licensed child care programs. In developing the guidelines, the commissioner shall consult with stakeholders, including licensed child care center providers, family child care providers, and county agencies.

II. Introduction

A. Purpose

These guidelines, required by S.F. 2, Article 7, Section 35, are intended to increase transparency for families and members of the public searching for and using licensed child care and to support existing licensed child care providers by providing clear, accurate, and objective information about their licensing compliance.

B. Background

Since 2010, the Department has posted public licensing information on all its licensed programs, including licensed child care centers and licensed family child care providers, through the webpage www.licensinglookup.dhs.state.mn.us (called “Licensing Information Lookup” or “LIL”). Licensing Information Lookup provides program-specific information about licensed programs and is also a document repository for licensing actions taken by the Department against a licensed program. LIL is searchable by name, city, county, ZIP code, program type, and license number.

Figure 1: LIL Search Page
Historically, the type of information posted for licensed child care centers and licensed family child care providers has varied. The table, below, shows the type of information currently made available on LIL, as of April 2018.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of information</th>
<th>Licensed child care centers</th>
<th>Licensed family child care programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Program information</strong>: Program name, phone number, address, license number, name of license holder, license status, type of service, effective date, expiration date, total capacity, restrictions, ages served</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Correction orders</strong> (sometimes called “Compliance Reports”): legal documents that indicate a program has violated licensing requirements. The document includes the violation, relevant legal citation(s), and how a program can request reconsideration to appeal the violation. Currently, “Compliance Reports” are also issued when a licensing review results in no violations.</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative Actions</strong> (also referred to as negative action orders or sanctions): legal documents that indicate when the Department takes an action against the licensed program (i.e., issues a fine, orders a conditional license, suspends the license, or revokes the license). The negative action states the reasons for the action, relevant legal citation(s), and how to appeal the action</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maltreatment investigative findings</strong>: legal document outlining whether a program or staff member maltreated a child (abuse, neglect, financial exploitation), action taken and/or required by the program, and appeal rights</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to what is posted on LIL, licensed centers and licensed family providers are required to physically post for two years any correction orders, fines, and orders of a conditional license, suspension, revocation, or Temporary Immediate Suspension, so enrolled families and prospective families have access to that compliance history onsite.³

### C. Changes to Licensing Information Lookup

Changes to federal law, provider feedback, and the 2017 requirement to develop posting guidelines require the Department to reconsider how it posts public licensing information for child care providers. The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), a significant source of federal funding for Minnesota’s Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP),

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¹ County licensors are responsible for issuing correction orders to family child care providers. This information has historically not been forwarded on to DHS, so it has not been available to DHS to post online.

² Counties conduct maltreatment investigations in family child care programs and are not required to issue public investigative memoranda for their maltreatment investigations. However, maltreatment findings for family child care programs are included in a licensing action that is issued as a result of substantiated maltreatment. Those licensing actions are posted on LIL.

³ Minn. Stat. 245A.06, subd. 8; Minn. Stat. 245A.07, subd. 5. When the correction order or order of conditional license is accompanied by a maltreatment investigation memorandum, the memoranda must also be posted.
was reauthorized in 2014 and establishes several improvements that will impact families and child care providers in Minnesota, including requirements to enhance transparency surrounding compliance monitoring visits (e.g., licensing reviews and investigations).

Federal law requires States to make program-specific information available including the date of a review or investigation, the result, and information about corrective action required and action taken by the provider to resolve any violations. In light of these new federal requirements, the Department has been in the process of developing a new electronic monitoring tool for county and state licensors. The monitoring tool will require that all licensors use the same checklist based upon applicable rules and statutes that govern the licensed program. It will enable DHS to collect county licensor results of monitoring visits and complaint investigations that are not otherwise transmitted to DHS unless a county agency is recommending a licensing action (such as a conditional license or order of revocation). The checklist will allow DHS to develop a secure compliance database from which DHS can analyze licensing violation trends and use that information to inform additional training or other resources for family child care providers and child care center staff as well as county and state licensors. Finally, and most importantly, the electronic checklist and compliance database will allow the Department to post monitoring information as required by federal law.

D. Stakeholder Engagement

As required by S.F. 2, Article 7, Section 35, the Department consulted with licensed child care centers, licensed family child care providers, and county licensors to gather input and recommendations for guidelines on the posting of public licensing information. The Department reviewed many other state websites to determine other ways of presenting public monitoring information and reviewed those examples, with stakeholders for feedback on what an enhanced LIL might look like, even if phased in over time. Please see Appendix A for more information.

E. Implementation

In light of these guidelines and new posting requirements set forth in federal law, the Department will be making a number of changes to Licensing Information Lookup beginning in 2018.

III. Posting Guidelines

The Department is releasing these guidelines that describe the posting of public licensing information for child care providers. The goals of these guidelines include: to increase transparency for families and members of the public searching for and using licensed child care; to promote high-quality, healthy, and safe child care; and to support existing licensed child care providers by providing clear, accurate, and objective information about their licensing compliance. Changes to Licensing Information Lookup will become effective beginning in 2018.

4 Sec. 658E(c)(2)(D).
### A. Public licensing information that DHS will post online

The following table identifies whether a licensing data point is currently posted on Licensing Information Lookup and/or whether that same data point will be posted on Licensing Information Lookup once changes are implemented in 2018.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Licensing Information</th>
<th>Currently Posted</th>
<th>Will be Posted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Program name</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>License status</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program address</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program phone number</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>License number</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>License holder(s)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>License holder entity ID number</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of service</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initial effective date</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current effective date</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expiration date</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensed to serve</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restrictions</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Setting</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services licensed to provide</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensing authority</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>License holder lives on site</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correction orders</td>
<td>Yes(^{5})</td>
<td>No(^{6})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring results following a visit including: Type of visit; Date of visit; Violations; and How violation was corrected</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fix-it tickets and corresponding violations</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maltreatment Investigative Memorandum</td>
<td>Yes(^{7})</td>
<td>Yes(^{8})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsubstantiated licensing complaints</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licensing Actions (formerly called “negative action orders” or sanctions)(^{9})</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All items marked with an asterisk are considered public licensing information. Therefore, while this information is not or will not be posted to LIL, it is public and can be given to members of the public on request.

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\(^{5}\) Currently only correction orders issued to Child Care Centers are posted to LIL.  
\(^{6}\) Correction orders issued to Child Care Centers will no longer be posted on LIL once new monitoring results are posted in late 2018.  
\(^{7}\) Currently posted only for Child Care Centers, even when maltreatment is not determined.  
\(^{8}\) Will be posted only when maltreatment is determined.  
\(^{9}\) Licensing actions (formerly referred to as negative action orders or sanctions) are legal documents that indicate when the Department takes an action against the licensed program (i.e., issues a fine, orders a conditional license, suspends the license, or revokes the license). The licensing action states the reasons for the action, relevant legal citation(s), and how to appeal the action.
B. How public information will be posted online

Through its stakeholder meetings, the Department received many recommendations about how it should display ("post") public licensing information. In response to these recommendations, the Department releases the following guidelines which will take effect in 2018 as IT enhancements are completed:

Correction orders (also called “compliance reports”)

DHS licensors currently issue correction orders to child care centers when a center has violated licensing requirements; county licensors issue correction orders to family child care programs. This correction order is a legal document and includes the violation(s), relevant legal citation(s), and how a program can request reconsideration. Correction orders for child care centers are also currently posted to Licensing Information Lookup. Correction orders for family child care programs are not currently posted to Licensing Information Lookup.

- The Department will begin to phase in changes to LIL in mid-to-late 2018 by posting the results of monitoring visits gathered through the use of the electronic checklist, at which point correction orders issued to child care centers will no longer be posted on LIL. (See more about the posting of “monitoring results” below.)
- Correction orders that were issued to child care centers 4 years ago or more will be removed from LIL. Therefore, by 2022, all correction orders issued to child care centers will be removed from LIL; though, the correction orders remain public information and can be requested by the public.
- While family child care providers also receive correction orders, the Department has historically not collected county-issued correction orders, and therefore, never posted these correction orders on LIL. Beginning in 2018, the Department will post the results of monitoring visits to comply with new federal requirements, but will not post the actual correction order sent to the family child care provider.
- Under current law, child care centers and family child care providers are required to post correction orders onsite for two years so families that use the child care provider are informed of recent violations identified during a monitoring visit.\(^{10}\) This law has not changed and this continues to be a requirement. If all violations in a correction order are reversed or rescinded, the provider can remove the original correction order from being posted in the family child care home or center. (Note: there are bills under consideration by the 2018 Legislature that would eliminate the requirement to post correction orders on site due to these new LIL enhancements. The Department will notify providers if the Legislature removes this on-site posting requirement.

Monitoring results

- Monitoring results gathered from the use of the newly developed electronic checklist will be posted to Licensing Information Lookup in 2018 for child care programs.
- Figure 2 on the next page shows an example of how child care monitoring information will be displayed on Licensing Information Lookup when the new enhancements take effect in mid-2018.
- The numbers 1-3 in Figure 2 show the information that will be displayed for each visit to a provider:
  1. date of visit;

\(^{10}\) Minn. Stat. 245A.06, subd. 8.
2. type of the monitoring visit (e.g. licensing review; licensing investigation, maltreatment investigation); and,
3. outcome of the visit.

Figure 2: Example of new LIL display of licensing monitoring information

- If there are no violations found during a monitoring visit, the monitoring results on LIL will indicate the date of the visit, the type of visit, and that the provider was “in compliance.”
- If there are violations found during a visit, the outcome summary table will provide:
  A. the category of violation;
  B. a plain language summary of each violation;
  C. an explanation how the violation was corrected (e.g. on site or by submission of documentation). If a violation is appealed, the “How Corrected” column will show “under appeal” for that violation; and
  D. the legal citation for the violation.
- Monitoring results will be posted to LIL three days after the licensor has issued to the provider a “no violations letter” or a correction order.
- Monitoring results will be posted for four years.
Maltreatment Investigations

- Beginning in late-2018, the Department will only post public investigative summaries (Maltreatment Investigative Memoranda) of maltreatment investigations conducted by DHS for centers when maltreatment was determined. The Department will not post Investigative Memoranda for centers when there is a finding of “maltreatment not determined.” However, the public summary that is written and distributed to the licensed provider, as required by the Maltreatment of Minors Act, remains a public document and can be given to members of the public on request.

County agencies are not required by the Maltreatment of Minors Act to complete a public summary for family child care maltreatment investigations. However, DHS issues a licensing action when maltreatment was determined in a family child care program, so information about the maltreatment determination for these programs will be available via the posting of the licensing action.

Licensing actions (formerly referred to as “negative actions” or “sanctions”)

- To promote transparency and child health, safety, and welfare, the Department will continue to post licensing actions (i.e., Temporary Immediate Suspensions, Orders of Conditional License, Orders of License Revocation, and Fines) at midnight the day that the Licensing Action is ordered.
- Licensing Actions will be posted for four years.
- Currently, all licensing actions are posted as “Negative Actions” on LIL. Beginning in mid-2018, licensing actions will be posted using more specific, plain language terminology (i.e., License Revocation, Temporary Immediate Suspension of License, Fine Order, Conditional License, etc.).

Figure 3: Licensing Actions

Figure 4: New terminology for Licensing Actions that will be posted
Appeal process

- In response to provider and county licensor feedback, the Department will be adding a feature to Licensing Information Lookup that indicates if a violation was corrected on-site and if a cited violation has been appealed.
- If a program appeals a licensing action, LIL will be updated to indicate the action has been appealed.
- In response to provider and county feedback, violations and licensing actions that are completely overturned will be removed from Licensing Information Lookup. A brief plain language summary explaining that the Order was overturned will be posted for 30 days so that the public can see that the provider was successful in its appeal.

Other

- If a center or family provider believes inaccurate program information has been posted on LIL, the provider should contact their licensor. The Department will correct any inaccurate program information as quickly as possible and make any necessary changes to LIL.

C. Additional considerations needed

The Department received several suggestions about additional information or changes that should be made to Licensing Information Lookup. The Department will continue to consider the following recommendations:

- Identifying if a provider has held a previous license and including that previous license’s history
- Identifying a provider’s Parent Aware rating
- Including the provider’s email address or website.

IV. Conclusion

The new display of public information from licensing visits made to providers will provide more accurate information, in plain language, to families seeking or using care, to providers, and to other interested members of the public. The changes described above increase transparency and provide more information to show provider compliance – whether at the time of the visit, or in response to a violation that was found. It also provides timely information about when a violation is under appeal and enables the Department to update the LIL display when the appeal decisions are finalized. The Department appreciates all those that provided feedback about the way that public licensing information on child care providers should be posted. The Department will continue to solicit feedback as it makes changes to Licensing Information Lookup in 2018.
Appendix A: Engagement Process

As required by S.F. 2, Article 7, Section 35, the Department consulted with licensed child care centers, licensed family child care providers, and county licensors to gather input and recommendations for guidelines on the posting of public licensing information.

A. Small provider workgroup meeting held on May 31, 2017

On Wednesday, May 31, 2017, the Department hosted a two-hour meeting at the DHS Lafayette building for a small group of licensed child care providers to offer input and perspectives on the posting of public licensing information. The department invited licensed providers who had worked with legislators to propose the policy change during the 2017 legislative session as well as other licensed providers who participated in previous stakeholder meetings. The meeting was held in the evening (starting at 6:00 PM) and was also made accessible by WebEx. This small group included a mixture of family child care providers and child care center providers.

B. Licensed child care provider meeting held on July 18, 2017

On Tuesday, July 18, 2017, the Department hosted a two-hour stakeholder meeting at the DHS Lafayette building for licensed child care providers to offer input on the posting of public licensing information. The department invited licensed providers who had worked with legislators to propose the policy change during the 2017 legislative session as well as other licensed providers who participated in previous stakeholder meetings. The meeting was held in the evening (starting at 6:00 PM) in recognition that many licensed child care providers are providing care to children during the day and cannot attend daytime meetings. The meeting was also made accessible by WebEx to accommodate attendance by licensed providers in greater Minnesota. Over 20 licensed providers participated (in person and via WebEx). This group included a mixture of family child care providers and child care center providers.

C. County licensing agency meeting held on July 31, 2017

On Monday, July 31, 2017, the Department hosted a one hour WebEx meeting for county licensing agencies to provide input on the posting of public licensing information. Over 100 individuals participated in the meeting from across the state.

D. General feedback

Providers and county licensors shared insightful feedback and recommendations about the types of public licensing information that should be posted about licensed child care programs. Several themes emerged including:

- Child care providers and county licensors encourage the Department to use plain language and to move away from posting correction orders. They believe Licensing Information Lookup should be a tool to help families understand the value of licensure.
  - Department Response: This change has been adopted.
• Several providers mentioned that it was important for the licensing webpage to show how long the provider has been licensed. It was important for providers that they didn’t lose their “history” by moving to a new county and are issued a new license.
  ▪ Department Response: This change is under consideration for development in a future phase.
• Several providers suggested that DHS wait until the entire appeals process has been completed before posting monitoring and review results. Other providers suggested that DHS wait at least until the period to request reconsideration (i.e., 20 days from date of issuing correction order) has passed and then indicate if any or all violations noted by the licensor have been appealed.
  ▪ Department Response: Monitoring and licensing review results will be posted 3 days after the correction order or no violations letter has been issued to the provider. If a provider appeals a violation, the results will be updated to indicate that the particular violation is “under appeal.”
• Many providers recommended that if a violation or licensing action is “overturned” following an appeal, the posting should be removed.
  ▪ Department Response: This change has been adopted.
• Some providers recommended that DHS not post results for longer than the 3 years required by the new federal law; counties had differing opinions as to how long results should be displayed so that families could have a fuller picture of provider compliance history.
  ▪ Department Response: Monitoring and review results will be posted for 4 years.
• Some providers recommended that DHS not post any summary of licensing complaint investigations that do not result in a substantiated violation.
  ▪ Department Response: This change has been adopted.
• Most providers and county licensors agreed that Temporary Immediate Suspension Orders should be posted immediately and that DHS should do a better job of using plain language summaries to provide information when these Orders, Conditional Orders or Orders of Revocation, are reversed on appeal.
  ▪ Department Response: This change is under consideration for development in a future phase.
• Child care providers encouraged the Department to include information in the Guidelines about how to correct inaccuracies and to have a process in place to ensure timely changes of the website so inaccurate information is removed quickly.
  ▪ Department Response: This change has been adopted.
• Child care providers encouraged the Department to review the process for resolving correction orders that have been appealed and overturned (in part and in whole).
  ▪ Department Response: This change has been adopted.
Appendix B: Before and after images of a provider profile

Before changes are implemented:
After changes are implemented:

Guidelines for the Posting of Child Care Licensing Information

Last revised: November 2018
Attention. If you need free help interpreting this document, ask your worker or call the number below for your language.

مالحة: إذا أردت مساعدة مجانية لترجمة هذه الوثيقة، أطلب ذلك من مشرفك أو اتصل على الرقم 1-844-217-3547.

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