

MEDIA RELEASE



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Home-based childcare licensure to begin in Norfolk

Provides training and resources to providers, assurance of safety and quality to parents

NORFOLK, VA – Norfolk will become the first city in Virginia to require licensure of home-based childcare providers to one or more children, increasing opportunities for entrepreneurship, providing training and resources to caregivers, and assuring parents of safe, high-quality day care for their kids.

A law that took effect July 1 gives Norfolk the ability to require licenses and oversight of home-based childcare providers for one or more children. The state only requires licensure for home-based childcare providers who are paid for five or more children. Before the new legislation was passed, only **county** governments in Virginia could regulate home-based childcare providers being paid for five or more children. These provisions limited city governments' ability to license and/or monitor home-based providers who cared for (and were paid for) fewer than five children.

Norfolk's program, the Home-based Childcare Network (HCN), will be created, administered, and enforced by the Department of Human Services. The Department began pushing for rigorous training and monitoring following the deaths of four young children in small, home-based childcare programs in Norfolk within a year – programs that until the law changed Human Services had no ability to oversee.

The effort to change the law found support and advocacy from Delegate Angelia Williams-Graves, a former Norfolk City Council member. Thanks to the City of Norfolk's push, any city or county can now regulate home-based childcare of one child or more.

City Council will soon consider an ordinance to make home-based childcare licensure mandatory in Norfolk.

DHS Director Denise Gallop said the intensive training and licensure process will allow "parents to go to work with peace of mind, knowing their kids are in safe places, all while creating a network of providers in our city where children can learn and grow," she said.

Small, home-based childcare providers seeking licensure will be assisted through the training and certification process by child-care mentors and other professionals to help complete the paperwork process. DHS has partnered with the City's Planning Department to support potential providers through the rigorous zoning process. Additionally, the Planning Department, led by George Homewood, will waive the \$1,400 in fees required for zoning and permits for providers who complete the training and certification process.

Licensure is about more than the law, however, and Gallop listed multiple incentives for undergoing the process. Licensure will allow providers to join a statewide registry available to parents searching for affordable, quality childcare. Licensed home-based childcare providers will be able to access federal resources including USDA nutrition support as well as receive equipment and other supplies through various community partners, such as Alternatives, Inc., a non-profit organization focused on early childhood education, quality preschool and school readiness.

DHS will provide live and virtual intensive training including psychological first aid, medical first aid, basic child development, how to appropriately assess and report child abuse and neglect, as well as creating an educational environment within the home.

The training protocols, with a curriculum developed by DHS staff and Carrington Consulting Group, will mirror those already in place to provide respite care for foster and adoptive families in Norfolk, meaning that those home-based childcare providers may be eligible to serve as respite care homes as well.

Additionally, DHS has partnered with the Old Dominion University Women's Business Center to help potential childcare providers build their businesses. Providers will learn how to recruit and hire appropriate staff, complete required business license paperwork, effectively document and budget, as well as other skills.

Gallop said DHS will recruit four new full-time staff members to support the program, expected to begin in October. Training of providers will begin with home-based childcare providers who have already joined the state's voluntary registry and then expand to others.

Human Services intends to train and license all the city's small home-based childcare providers, most likely a two-year process. Gallop said she seeks the same quality of childcare for every Norfolk family that she would want for her own children. New funding for childcare means more families will be able to find support – but the state currently has too few qualified providers “who have gone through these rigorous processes, demonstrating their commitment, expertise, and love for children.”

“These are Norfolk's children,” Gallop said, and “we are the voice of the community.”

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