



Saipan Town Hall Meeting at Koblerville



The first Saipan Town Hall meeting was held on Thursday, December 14, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. at Koblerville Elementary School. In attendance were 40 providers and individuals from within the island community.

The first Saipan town hall meeting was moderated by Rita A. Sablan and discussions were facilitated by Gordon B. Salas, Child Care Licensing Program Supervisor and Herman T. Guerrero. The purpose of the town hall meeting was to provide a forum for public discussion on the Child Care Standards Act of 1985. The intent is to update the Northern Mariana Islands Administrative Code; T-55 Department of Community and Cultural Affairs, Subchapter 55-40.

The attendees raised the following questions and comments:

Reference: Part 100 Rules Governing the Licensing of Day Care Centers, Group Child Care Homes, Family Child Care Homes, Before and After School Programs.

Subpart A – Licensing Procedures
§55-40.1-101 Application

Reference: Part 200 Day Care Center & Group Child Care Homes, Before and After School Programs
Reference: Part 300 Family Child Care Homes

Question: As a licensed family home care provider, will I be required to follow day care rules and regulations?

Response: The response to this question is three-fold. First, there is a general licensing requirement for any and all individuals interested in operating a child care center or a family care home in the CNMI. These requirements can be found in Part 100. Second, Part 200 articulates rules and regulations pertaining to Day Care Centers and Group Child Care Homes, Before and After School Programs. Third, Part 300 delineates rules and regulations pertaining to Family Child Care Homes. If licensed as a family home care provider, the rules and regulations that would apply to you would be Part 300 – Family Child Care Homes.

Question: What are the health and safety training requirements?

Response: CCLP currently does not have an independent health and safety training in place. However, CCLP collaborates with CCDF on their pre-service training which are:

1. Prevention and control of infectious diseases (including immunization);
2. Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) prevention and use of safe sleep practices;
3. Administration of medication;
4. Prevention/response to emergencies due to food and allergic reactions;
5. Building and physical premises safety;
6. Prevention of shaken baby syndrome, abusive head trauma, and child maltreatment;
7. Emergency preparedness and response planning;
8. Handling and storage of hazardous materials and the appropriate disposal of bio-contaminants;
9. Transportation;
10. Pediatric first-aid and Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR);
11. Recognition and reporting of child abuse and neglect;

12. Child development.

The above pre-service training activities are available to all CCLP licensed and CCDF certified (subsidy purposes) centers or Family Child Care Home. For the centers that are CCLP licensed but not CCDF certified, they are given the opportunity to attend when the calendar schedule indicates available for the community.

Question: Do we have to pay for training, for example, training on emergency drills, like fire drills?

Response: There are trainings that are provided at no cost and some that require fees. Most trainings by CCDF through their independent contractor are at no cost. Other trainings offered by other agencies or organizations might be at cost to the provider or individual. Another training that is available via an online format is through Texas A & M.

Reference: Part 100 Rules Governing the Licensing of Day Care Centers, Group Child Care Homes, Family Child Care Homes, Before and After School Programs.

Subpart A – Licensing Procedures
§55-40.1-101 Application

Question: How do we apply for child care license without encountering duplication?

Response: The licensing procedure for day care, group child care homes, family child care homes, before and after school programs is very explicit. (See Part 100). The licensing guidelines in Part 100 does not expect applicants to go through a duplicative licensing application process within the Child Care Licensing Program.

Comment received from the audience: The statement made earlier about the duplication in the application process needs attention and must be taken care of by the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs.

Other comments received:

Comment: There is so much information that parents and providers would have to digest to understand the rules and regulations as presented tonight. I suggest that CCLP engages in a weekly information that is disseminated through the various medium, i.e., weekly news release in the media, or a program on the radio station.

Response: The CCLP has conducted several outreach events in the last few months via KKMP, CNMI Radio, and with licensed Child Care providers, family child care homes and before and after school programs.

Tonight's forum is another venue that allows parents, providers, and community members to receive updated information and to participate in the process of updating the Child Care rules and regulations. Meanwhile, the audience were informed that information on the updates is also available through the CCLP website, and that they can communicate to CCLP Supervisor Gordon B. Salas via email or telephone as published in the flyers made available to them at the town hall meeting.

Comment: The business license fee is affecting the licensed exempt providers. Can CCLP do something about this to help providers, especially First Responders?

Response: The business license fee is within the purview of the Department of Finance and concerns on this matter should be addressed to the Business License Office or your precinct representatives. CCLP does not have control of what and how other regulatory agencies establishes their fees.

Comment: Why has it taken the Department of Community and Cultural Affairs so long to update the Child Care Rules and Regulations?

Response: The Department of Community and Cultural Affairs have taken a stand to continuously improve the rules and regulations pertaining to the Child Care Licensing Program. Several updates were made in 2003, 2014, and 2016. As we collaborate closely with our stakeholders, providers, and our partner agencies, we find the need to once again revisit the CCLP rules and regulations this year.

Reference: Part 200 Day Care Center & Group Child Care Homes, Before and After School Programs Subpart C – Staffing Requirements

§55-40.1-226 Staff Training, Experience, and Personal Qualifications

(h)(5),(i)(5) In all case, must have six months work experience in an early childhood education program.

(j) waivers for teachers or assistant teacher positions may be granted by the Child Care Licensing Program if there are no qualified applicants available for the position,

Question: The 6 months experience would be difficult to be met by new applicants for the centers and this requirement will be a challenge for child care providers to find individuals with this background. Can this be work experience be changed?

Response: If child care providers are not able to find teacher or assistant teacher applicants with the 6 months experience, then they can seek waiver through the Child Care Licensing Program. See Part 200 and the reference noted above.

Question: Will CCLP be able to implement changes, sustain the program and monitor?

Response: The Child Care Licensing Program is responsible and obligated to implement the child care rules and regulations accordingly. Source: PL 4-67, § 4.