

## Reducing the Risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and Using Safe Sleeping Practices

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014<sup>1</sup> and the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Program final rule (2016)<sup>2</sup>, require states and territories to have health and safety requirements in 11 different topic areas, as well as preservice and ongoing training on those topics, for all providers that receive payments from the CCDF subsidy program.<sup>3</sup> This brief provides an overview of **reducing the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and using safe sleeping practices**.

A series of briefs about CCDF health and safety requirements was first released in July 2016 by the National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance (ECQA Center) in response to the CCDBG Act of 2014. A summary of findings about the topic from the [2017 Child Care Licensing Study](#) is a feature of this July 2020 update to those briefs. Data for the study were compiled from state child care licensing regulations in effect as of December 31, 2017 (ECQA Center, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c).

Licensing and CCDF Administrators may find the brief helpful as they consider revisions to state standards for both licensed and license-exempt providers. It may also be of value to early childhood and school-age care programs and family child care providers, helping them understand and improve the health and safety of their learning environments.

### What Are the Basic Requirements?

[Caring for Our Children Basics: Health and Safety Foundations for Early Care and Education](#) (CFOCB) represents the minimum health and safety standards experts believe should be in place where children are cared for outside their homes. The following lists contain CFOCB links to the basic requirements for reducing the risk of sudden infant death syndrome and the use of safe sleeping practices.

- ◆ [Pre-service Training/Orientation](#)
- ◆ [Safe Sleep Practices and SIDS Risk Reduction](#)
- ◆ [Cribs and Play Yards](#)

Best practices, which exceed CCDF requirements, are found in [Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, CFOC Standards Online Database](#) (CFOC). You can learn more about best practice recommendations to reduce the risk of SIDS and promote safe sleeping practices by exploring the following CFOC links:

- ◆ [3.1.4.1: Safe Sleep Practices and Sudden Unexpected Infant Death \(SUID\)/SIDS Risk Reduction](#)
- ◆ [Special Collection: Safe Sleep Practices and SIDS/Suffocation Risk Reduction](#)

<sup>1</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 9858c(c)(2)(I) (2015).

<sup>2</sup> Child Care and Development Fund, 45 C.F.R. § 98.41 (2016).

<sup>3</sup> Child Care and Development Fund, 45 C.F.R. § 98.44 (2016).

## Why Is It Important to Children?

It is widely understood that the number of deaths of infants from SIDS can be reduced if families and child care providers use safe sleeping practices. The American Academy of Pediatrics has several [recommendations about safe sleeping](#) for infants that child care providers can follow, including the following:

- ◆ Until their first birthday, infants should sleep on their backs for all sleep times—for naps and at night.
- ◆ Use a firm sleep surface, such as a crib, bassinet, portable crib, or play yard, that meets the safety standards of the Consumer Product Safety Commission, along with a tight-fitting, firm mattress and fitted sheet designed for the product (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2016).
- ◆ Keep soft objects, loose bedding, or any objects that could increase the risk of entrapment, suffocation, or strangulation out of the infant's sleep area (Moon, 2020).

## How Do States Establish Requirements?

### Key Findings from the 2017 Child Care Licensing Study

Findings from the [2017 Child Care Licensing Study](#), a large-scale research study of child care licensing requirements for child care centers, family child care homes (FCCHs), and group child care homes (GCCHs), show commonly found requirements related to reducing the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) and using safe sleeping practices (ECQA Center, 2020a, 2020b, 2020c). “Percent of states” and “states” refer to data from all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

- ◆ Nearly all states (94 percent) require child care centers to place infants on their **backs to sleep**. For FCCH settings, 89 percent of states have this requirement, and for GCCHs it is 87 percent.
- ◆ More than three-quarters of states allow **physicians to authorize different sleep positions** for infants in centers, FCCHs, and GCCHs.
- ◆ Only 12 percent of states allow **parents or guardians to authorize a different sleep position** for centers. For FCCHs, only 7 percent of states allow this exception, while 3 percent of states allow it in GCCHs.
- ◆ For all facility types, approximately 60 percent of states mandate that no **soft objects or loose bedding** be placed in cribs with children.
- ◆ More than half of states require centers to only use cribs that meet the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission **requirements for infant cribs**. More than one-third of states have this requirement for FCCHs and GCCHs.
- ◆ Sixty percent of states require center staff and home-based providers to **complete training** about reducing the risk of SIDS and using safe sleeping practices.

### Examples of State Licensed Child Care Requirements

The following tables provide links to state licensing requirements from **Texas, Washington, Florida, and Georgia** that support the prevention of SIDS and use of safe sleeping practices. These examples do not include all states that have these requirements but are meant to represent a range of approaches states have taken in their regulations.

Links to the full text of state and territory licensing regulations for child care centers, FCCH settings, and GCCH settings are found in the [National Database of Child Care Licensing Regulations](#).

### Child Care Center Requirements

**Texas**

*Chapter 746: Minimum Standards for Child-Care Centers (October 2021)*

<https://hhs.texas.gov/sites/default/files/documents/doing-business-with-hhs/provider-portal/protective-services/ccl/min-standards/chapter-746-centers.pdf>

- §746.2415 What specific types of equipment am I prohibited from using with infants?
- §746.2427 Are infants required to sleep on their backs?
- §746.2428 May I swaddle an infant to help the infant sleep?
- §746.2429 If an infant has difficulty falling asleep, may I cover the infant’s head or crib?

**Washington**

*Chapter 110-300: Washington Administrative Code, Foundational Quality Standards for Early Learning Programs (January 2022)*

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/WAC/default.aspx?cite=110-300>

- 110-300-0106: Training requirements.
- 110-300-0290: Infant and toddler sleep, rest, and equipment.
- 110-300-0291: Infant safe sleep practices.

### Family Child Care Home Requirements

**Florida**

*Family Day Care Home and Large Family Child Care Home Handbook, Section 7: Health and Safety Requirements (October 2021)*

<https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/child-care/docs/FamilyChildCareHomeLicensingHandbook.pdf?d=2020-4-16>

- 7.8: Appropriate, Safe and Sanitary Bedding

**Georgia**

*Rules and Regulations Family Child Care Learning Homes Chapter 290-2-3 (October 2020)*

<http://dec.al.ga.gov/documents/attachments/FCCLHRulesAndRegulations.pdf>

- 290-2-3-.19: Safe Sleeping and Resting Requirements

## Examples of State License-Exempt Child Care Requirements

States have exemptions in law or regulation that define the types of center-based facilities and home-based providers that are not required to obtain a state license to operate legally. Most states allow some exempt providers to receive CCDF funding, and while exempt providers are not subject to the regulatory requirements set forth by the licensing agency, the CCDF final rule<sup>4</sup> requires states and territories to have health and safety requirements in 11 different topic areas for all providers participating in the CCDF subsidy program, as well as preservice and ongoing training on those topics.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Child Care and Development Fund, 45 C.F.R. § 98.41 (2016).

<sup>5</sup> Child Care and Development Fund, 45 C.F.R. § 98.44 (2016).

The following table provides examples from **Arkansas** and **Iowa** of requirements for license-exempt programs about reducing sudden infant death syndrome and using safe sleeping practices. These examples do not include all states that have these requirements but are meant to represent a range of approaches states have taken in establishing requirements for license-exempt programs.

License-Exempt Child Care Requirements
<p><b>Arkansas</b>  <i>Minimum Licensing Requirements for Registered Child Care Family Homes</i> (December 2020)  <a href="https://humanservices.arkansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020-CCFH-Clean-Copy.pdf">https://humanservices.arkansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020-CCFH-Clean-Copy.pdf</a></p> <p>402: Infant &amp; Toddler Specific Program Requirements                      1001: Sleeping Arrangement Requirements</p>
<p><b>Iowa</b>  <i>Chapter 120, Child Care Homes, Iowa Administrative Code</i> (November 2021)  <a href="https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/ACO/chapter/441.120.pdf">https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/ACO/chapter/441.120.pdf</a></p> <p>120.8(5): Safe sleep.</p>

## Where Can I Find More Information?

### 2017 Child Care Licensing Study

The ECQA Center, in partnership with the National Association for Regulatory Administration, has conducted a large-scale research study of child care licensing provider and facility requirements and licensing agency policies every three years since 2005. The [2017 Child Care Licensing Study](#) looks at licensing requirements for child care centers, family child care homes, and group child care homes and licensing agency policies in all 50 states and the District of Columbia for 2017. The ECQA Center (2020a, 2020b, 2020c) released three research briefs about trends in child care licensing that describe changes in licensing requirements and policies by comparing the findings from the 2017 study with findings from previous child care licensing studies.

- ◆ [Trends in Child Care Center Licensing Requirements and Policies for 2017: Research Brief #1](#)
- ◆ [Trends in Family Child Care Home Licensing Requirements and Policies for 2017: Research Brief #2](#)
- ◆ [Trends in Group Child Care Home Licensing Requirements and Policies of 2017: Research Brief #3](#)

### Healthy States: Health and Safety Training Toolkit

The [Healthy States: Health and Safety Training Toolkit](#), by the National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness, provides up-to-date research and science-informed resources, including online modules, webinars, and other materials. Its purpose is to inform and train program-level staff in all early childhood education settings.

The toolkit also gives a summary of the health and safety requirements in the CCDBG Act of 2014 and provides links to CFOCB and CFOC.

## Additional Resources

- ◆ [Caring for Our Children Basics Health and Safety Standards Alignment Tool for Child Care Centers and Family Child Care Homes](#) (2016), by the National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance, provides a simple format for states and territories to compare their current early childhood program requirements and standards against the recommended health and safety standards in CFOCB.
- ◆ [Developing and Revising Child Care Licensing Requirements](#) (2017), by the National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance, presents steps for developing and revising child care licensing requirements based on several states' successful practices.
- ◆ [Child Care Licensing Tools and Resources](#) (n.d.), a page of the [Child Care Technical Assistance Network](#) website with tools and resources about child care licensing designed to help states and territories improve their practices, strengthen provider requirements, and develop the skills of licensing staff.

## References

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- Moon, R. Y. (2020). *How to keep your sleeping baby safe: AAP policy explained*.  
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