



FREE STARTING GUIDE

Your Florida child-care startup starting file.

A practical worksheet for choosing your setting, finding the responsible licensing authority, and preparing your first official call.

Choose your setting	Confirm your county	Keep dated proof
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Reviewed September 5, 2026

Florida Child Care Desk is independent. This guide is educational orientation, not legal advice, a license determination, or a substitute for Florida DCF or your local licensing authority.



Start with the setting—not the forms.

Florida regulates different child-care settings through different standards. Use the official questionnaire and your licensing authority to confirm which category applies before you buy equipment, sign a lease, or submit an application.

Family child-care home

Care operated from a residence. Licensing or registration can depend on location and facts.

Large family child-care home

A distinct licensed home category with additional eligibility and operating requirements.

Child-care facility

A center or non-residential setting. Use the facility path and facility handbook.

Your county changes the starting office

Florida DCF currently licenses child-care facilities and homes in 63 counties. Broward, Palm Beach, Pinellas, and Sarasota regulate child care through local licensing authorities. Select your county in the online route finder to see the correct starting point.

Find your county route at floridachildcaresdesk.com →



Build your opening file in order.

- 01 ☐ **Complete the official licensing questionnaire**
Use it to identify the likely category, then confirm that result with the responsible licensing office.

- 02 ☐ **Confirm the responsible licensing authority**
Save the office name, phone number, date contacted, and the name of the person who answered.

- 03 ☐ **Read the current handbook**
Use the handbook for your setting and note its publication or revision date.

- 04 ☐ **List training and credential requirements**
Separate owner, director, employee, substitute, and household-member requirements.

- 05 ☐ **Confirm background-screening steps**
Ask which portal, identifiers, and timing apply before submitting fingerprints or hiring.

- 06 ☐ **Check the site before spending**
Confirm zoning, fire, health, HOA, landlord, occupancy, and local approvals that may apply.

- 07 ☐ **Create a dated records system**
Keep forms, correspondence, receipts, inspections, training, and renewal evidence in separate folders.



03 / Call worksheet

Make the first licensing call count.

County: _____

Planned setting: _____

Licensing authority: _____

Person contacted: _____ Date: _____

Questions to ask

01 ☐ **Which licensing or registration category applies?**
Describe where care will occur, expected capacity, ages served, and whether anyone will assist you.

02 ☐ **Which current application and handbook should I use?**
Ask for the exact official page rather than relying on a copied form.

03 ☐ **What must be completed before applying?**
Confirm training, screening, site, inspection, and local approval prerequisites.

04 ☐ **What fees and timelines should I plan for?**
Ask what is paid, to whom, and at what stage. Do not treat an estimate as a guarantee.

Notes



Keep proof where you can find it.

A simple records system helps you return to the source, show what was completed, and spot what needs renewal. Use dated filenames and keep sensitive information in secured storage—not ordinary email.

Folder	What belongs there
01 — Authority	Licensing contacts, written answers, source links, and review dates
02 — Application	Current application, receipts, corrections, and submission confirmation
03 — People	Training, credentials, screening status, and renewal dates
04 — Property	Zoning, fire, health, occupancy, HOA, landlord, and inspection records
05 — Operations	Policies, emergency plans, transportation, attendance, and required logs
06 — Renewals	License, training, inspection, insurance, and document renewal calendar

Do not email Social Security numbers, background-screening documents, children's records, health information, payment-card details, or licensing credentials to Florida Child Care Desk.



Return to the controlling source.

These pages were checked on September 5, 2026. Government pages, forms, and rules can change; confirm the current page date and requirements with your licensing authority.

Florida DCF — About Child Care Licensure

<https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/child-family/child-care/about-child-care-licensure/>

Florida DCF — Licensing Contacts by Region

<https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/child-family/child-care/child-care-providers-and-staff/child-care-contacts>

Florida DCF — Forms and Applications

<https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/child-family/child-care/child-care-providers-and-staff/forms-and-applications>

Florida DCF — Laws, Rules, and Handbooks

<https://www.myflfamilies.com/services/child-family/child-care/child-care-laws-and-requirements/>

Florida DCF — CARES Application

<https://cares.myflfamilies.com/>

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