

December 10, 2012

Members of the Administrative Rules Committee Rep, Kim Koppelman Chairman, Rep. Bill Amerman, Rep, Tracy Boe, Rep. Randy Boehning, Rep. Robert Frantsvog, Rep. David Monson, Rep. Mike Schatz, Rep. Blair Thoreson, Sen. John M. Andrist, Sen. Joan Heckaman, Sen. Jerry Klein, Sen. Margaret Sitte and John Walstad, Code Revisor.

Since I am unable to attend your December 12th meeting, due to a previous commitment to attend a meeting in Dickinson of area legislators, economic developers and others with the topic of discussion being possible solutions to the serious child care shortage, I am submitting written comments.

I was a public school teacher for 3 years, a licensed child care provider in our Hettinger home for 26 years, and for the past 11 years have been the Executive Secretary for the Hettinger Area Chamber of Commerce. I have been involved in all the child care rule revision processes since the late 1980's. I am a member of the Early Childhood Advisory Committee which was mandated by the 2009 Legislature to review and propose changes to child care rules in the various licensing chapters. When working on this latest rules revision, one of our primary concerns was how we could propose changes which would increase capacity which would not negatively impact children in care.

I am asking your committee to approve all the proposed child care rule changes as presented by Children and Family Services division of DHS.

Rule revisions to increase capacity include:

- Allowing Group and Center providers/facilities who have been licensed a minimum of 2 years and are in good standing the option to apply for a waiver which could allow up a maximum of .25 additional ratio points to meet a specified child care need.
- Give Group providers the option of operating under "ratio requirements" of Group or the "numbers of Family" whichever allowed them the greatest number of children.
- Removal of maximum number of children allowed per caregiver in Group rules.
- Requirement for Self-declared providers to take a basic child care course. Basic child care has been a requirement for Family and Center for years and as of 2011 Rules required for Family and Center staff members as well. Therefore expecting a basic child care course be taken by Self-declared providers is simply a good idea. While some may see this proposed requirement as a barrier, I actually think it might be an incentive for some Self-declared providers to step up to a Family or Group license therefore allowing them to care for additional children. Self-declared providers can only care for 5 or fewer children.

Proposed rule revisions to ease staffing dilemmas include:

- Qualifications for Center Director, Group Supervisor, Preschool Director, Preschool Teacher and School age Center Director were changed to allow more people to qualify for these positions without negatively impacting the level of care provided.
- Removal of requirement of Center Supervisor to have CPR and First Aid certification because someone already must be on site who is certified.

Proposed changes to improve clarification for Family, Group and Center operators include:

- Relocating all of the required policies to just one section rather than appearing in multiple sections throughout each licensing chapter for easy in operators to develop their individual policy manuals.
- Giving parents the option to sign a form granting permission for their infant to be allowed to sleep with a pacifier, one comfort item and a blanket while at child care. Some see this as not necessary, but with the American Association of Pediatrics taking the position that none of these should be allowed in an infant's crib this would allow providers to do so with signed parental permission. During the oral and written comment period this was the only proposed rule which received numerous statements of opposition. Opposition was not based upon adults thinking infant doesn't need these items, but "over fear that this regulation might make it harder for providers to become licensed or maintain licensing." I certainly do not agree with this fear. Since it is absolutely in the best interest of an infant's comfort and emotional wellbeing, I strongly support this proposed revision.

Respectively submitted by:

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