

Residential Child Care:

A Surveyor's Journey: A Day in the Life

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Georgia Department of Human Services

Vision, Mission and Core Values

Vision

Stronger Families for a Stronger Georgia.

Mission

Strengthen Georgia by providing Individuals and Families access to services that promote self-sufficiency, independence, and protect Georgia's vulnerable children and adults.

Core Values

- **Provide access to resources that offer support and empower Georgians and their families.**
- **Deliver services professionally and treat all clients with dignity and respect. Manage business operations effectively and efficiently by aligning resources across the agency.**
- **Promote accountability, transparency and quality in all services we deliver and programs we administer.**
- **Develop our employees at all levels of the agency.**

RCC: Who We Are

RCC inspects, monitors, licenses, registers, and certifies a variety of child care facilities:

- CPA: Child Placing Agency
- CCI: Child Caring Institution
- OCCP: Outdoor Child Caring Program
- CTCC: Children's Transitional Care Center
- MH: Maternity Home
- Runaway & Homeless Youth Program

The Numbers

RCC employs 14 professional Surveyors responsible for:

- Child Placing Agencies: 94
- Child Caring Institutions: 203
- Outdoor Child Caring Programs: 7
- Maternity Homes: 5
- Children's Transitional Care Centers: 1
- Runaway & Homeless Youth Programs: 1

RCC: What We Do

- **Record and Observe:** Surveyors record interviews, specifics of documentation, photographs of physical evidence, time, place, and date. Surveyors observe the environment, staff, residents, and documentation
- **Correct:** Surveyors identify agency deficiencies and provide guidance on the correction of these deficiencies as they relate to state regulations
- **Complete:** Surveyors ensure that agencies provide complete corrections for the identified deficiencies and identify ways to maintain compliance

The Re-licensure Inspection

The Process

Phases of a Re-licensure:

- Pre-Survey
- Re-licensure Visit
- Documentation of Findings
- Completion
- Follow-up/Foster Home Visits

Phase #1: Pre-Survey

- **Check facility notes for any changes in address, phone numbers of key staff or agency, and specific periods of no availability**
- **Prepare all travel needs to include mapping direction to agency, car rental, and any travel time considerations**
- **Review past surveys and facility historical information**
- **Gather any needed materials to include: camera, computer, licensure forms, and business cards**
- **Decide proper clothing and shoes if you are visiting an OCCP or completing CPA foster home visits**

Phase #2: The Visit

- Review a sample of personnel records
- Review a sample of resident/child case records
- Review physical plant if necessary (all except CPA)
- Review of Board of Directors and board minutes (CPA only)
- Review annual vehicle inspection, fire inspection, and bonding insurance
- Provide annual licensure paperwork to agency management

Phase #3: Documentation

- Document any records that are not in compliance with RCC rules and regulations
- Take pictures of any physical plant issues that are not in compliance with RCC rules and regulations
- Make copies of and document any reasons the agency is not in compliance with RCC rules and regulations
- Take pictures of the physical plant and document any records in which the agency has shown improvement to review with the agency administration

Phase #4: Completion

- Complete an exit interview with director of the agency or appointed staff of any areas of non-compliance and improvements made
- Document the names, positions, and contact information for any staff involved in the exit interview
- Leave your business card with contact information for follow up by the agency

The Final Phase

- **Complete a Preliminary Report of findings within five business days of visit and send to the Director or agency representative**
- **The surveyor will need to notify the supervisor in the case of a possible adverse action (citations in which fines might be given)**
- **Complete a full report of deficiencies within thirty days of licensure visit and send this to the agency representative. The agency must submit a Plan of Correction within 10 days of receipt of the final inspection report**
- **Begin foster home visits to be completed within thirty days, if applicable (CPA's only)**

Complaint and Incident Investigations

Types of Investigations

- Residential Child Care (RCC) conducts two types of investigations:
 - Complaint investigations: Investigation of allegations of possible violations of licensing rules and regulations reported by citizens, surveyors, and other state and community agencies
 - Incident investigations: Investigation of possible rule violations resulting from the licensed facility or agency's mandatory reporting of serious and unusual incidents

Investigation Assignments

- Complaints and incidents are prioritized and assigned during the triage process
- Investigations include both onsite and off-site inspections
- The Surveyor will be notified weekly by email of all complaints/incidents assigned

Step #1: Preparation

- Surveyor will review the complaint/incident to assess what information will be necessary to conduct the investigation
- Surveyor will contact the complainant (if applicable) to verify and/or clarify information from the complaint, obtain specific information, obtain new information, and/or obtain additional contacts (i.e. witnesses, victims, and perpetrators)

Step #1: Preparation (cont.)

- Surveyor will review the facility's history for prior complaint history, prior citations, and other incidents or complaints involving similar incidents or involving the current victim and/or perpetrator
- Surveyor will obtain and review a copy of the most recent acceptable plan of correction
- Surveyor will ensure the prior to the visit that all resources and materials are ready and accounted for

Step #2: Initiating the Investigation

- Based on the prioritization timeframe for completion, the Surveyor will either initiate the investigation by making an unannounced onsite visit to the facility/agency or making an unannounced telephone contact to the facility/agency by the date due on the schedule
- Surveyor will contact the Director or person in charge at the operation unless it has been determined that the individual is the subject of the investigation or may impede the investigation

Step #2: Initiating the Investigation (cont).

- Surveyor will introduce him/herself and state the purpose of the visit
- If conducting an investigation at a facility, the Surveyor will conduct a walk-through of the facility to identify any hazards to health and safety such as inadequate staff/child ratios or supervision; inadequate food, and fire, structural or chemical hazards

Step #3: Conducting the Investigation

- Surveyor will conduct interviews, record reviews, review of relevant facility documents, etc. as determined necessary. Offsite investigations will require the Surveyor to request documents be faxed, mailed or emailed within 24 hours of the request
- Surveyor will document all interviews, take thorough notes of any observations or conversations, take photographs, and maintain copies of all supporting documents

Step #3: Conducting the Investigation (cont.)

- Surveyor will conduct an exit conference with the Director or available agency representative before exiting the facility
- Surveyor will contact other local and state agencies, medical facilities, etc. to gather information relevant to the investigation
- Surveyor will conduct home visits and additional interviews with witnesses as needed, if necessary

Step #4: Evaluating the Evidence

- Surveyor will review and analyze information gathered during the investigation to determine whether additional information is necessary and to determine whether the information gathered supports non-compliance with the rules and regulations
- Surveyor will weigh the evidence
- Ask yourself if additional information is needed. If so, request it
- You must balance the statements of individuals and consider the evidence as a whole

Step #5: Making a determination

- Surveyor will make a preliminary determination of whether the allegation is substantiated, unsubstantiated or inconclusive based on the evaluation of the information gathered during the investigation
- **Substantiated allegation:** The allegation happened or is valid, because the preponderance of the evidence supports the allegation
- **Inconclusive allegation:** Although the allegation may have happened or is valid, there is not sufficient evidence to prove that the allegation occurred
- **Unsubstantiated allegation:** The allegation is not valid, because there is little to no evidence to support the allegation

The Final Steps

- Surveyor will provide a preliminary report to the facility/agency within 5 days of the completion of the investigation and provide a final report within 30 days
- Surveyor will document all investigation notes in Aspen Complaint Tracking System (ACTS) within the designated timeframe and all citations in Aspen Central Office (ACO) according to designated timeframes
- Surveyor will request a written plan of correction (POC) along with the final report, as required by policy
- Surveyor will mail a copy of the Summary- Non-Confidential report located in ACTS to the complainant, as required

Conclusion

- Although there are several steps involved to license, monitor, inspect, register and certify facilities and programs, RCC requires that a certain standard is met to ensure a quality level of care for Georgia's children
- Surveyors take pride in ensuring that these standards are understood, implemented and upheld
- Surveyors approach each visit, to license, inspect or investigate, with the Vision, Mission and Core Values of DHS and RCC in mind

Questions?

