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To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for your recent inquiry about becoming a Broward and/or Palm Beach County Licensed Child Care Agency/Group Home. As of July 1, 2003, the responsibility for contracting of group care services for dependent children has been assigned by the Department of Children & Families (DCF) to ChildNet, the designated lead agency for Community Based Care in Broward and Palm Beach Counties. Please read the following paragraphs carefully as they describe the requirements which must be met in order to operate a group home.

Chapter 65C-14, Florida Administrative Code and Chapter 409.175, Florida Statutes govern Child Caring Agency operation. In addition, Chapter 435 Florida Statutes provides background-screening requirements for prospective owners, operators and employees of group homes. **The Florida Statutes and Administrative Codes are accessible through the Internet** (See page 2 of this letter for detailed instructions).

Please find attached to this letter the Guidelines for Community Residential Homes, an application packet containing required forms to be completed and submitted to DCF (A step-by-step guide is located on page 14 within **the Guidelines for Community Residential Homes**) and **ChildNet's Policy and Procedure** regarding the procurement of new services. It is important that you understand that being licensed as a group home provider does not, in any way, ensure that ChildNet will place dependent children in your facility. ChildNet only places dependent children in group homes operated by providers with whom we have a contract to provide this specific service. However, in unique individual cases additional placement options may be explored provided that an agency has been credentialed through our Network Provider Application and Credentialing process. New contracts for group homes will be issued through a competitive public process and only when a current program must be replaced or staff and stakeholder input indicates a need for new or additional services and the financial resources are available to support that service. If you would like to be notified about future contract procurement opportunities, please contact our Director of Contracts at (954) 414-6000, ext. 3816.

Once again, thank you for your interest in providing care for Broward and Palm Beach's most vulnerable children. If you have questions, concerns or require additional information, please contact us directly at (954) 414-6000, ext. 3816.

Sincerely,

Denese Rankine-Palmer
Director of Contracts

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To access Florida Administrative Codes and Statutes via the Internet, please follow the instructions below.

(Note: if there are any broken links preventing you from viewing said information, please inform ChildNet's Contracts Department immediately.)

To view **Florida Administrative Codes** governing Child Caring Agencies:

1. Go to <https://www.flrules.org>
2. Search "By Chapter Number", enter **65C-14**
3. Once the new page opens, click on, "VIEW CHAPTER" or "VIEW INDIVIDUAL RULES"

To view Florida Statutes governing Child Caring Agencies:

1. Go to <http://www.flsenate.gov/statutes>
2. Scroll down and click on "**TITLE XXX SOCIAL WELFARE**"
3. Scroll down and click on "**Chapter 409 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE**"
4. Scroll down and click on "**409.175** Licensure of family foster homes, residential child-caring agencies, and child-placing agencies; public records exemption"

To view Florida Statute 435 (Background Screening):

1. Go to <http://www.flsenate.gov/statutes>
2. Scroll down and click on "**TITLE XXXI LABOR**"
3. Scroll down and click on "**Chapter 435 EMPLOYMENT SCREENING**"

Larry Rein
Chief Executive Officer and
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Chief Financial Officer





Guidelines for Community Residential Homes

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An Overview of the Department of Children and Families Organization

The Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) provide health and social services to people who are elderly, disabled, sick and poor or at-risk. DCF programs include medical care for children and adults through the Medicaid program, alcohol and substance abuse services, other health services, child support enforcement, financial assistance through Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), Food Stamps, job training and help for Floridians age 60 or older and disabled adults of any age. Most services are offered free of charge to eligible people while others are based on ability to pay. Some DCF programs, such as environmental health programs serve all the citizens of Florida.

DCF operates, contracts for and licenses many residential facilities, including hospitals for people with mental illness, facilities for people with developmental disabilities, adult congregate living facilities, training schools for delinquent minors, and group homes and halfway houses for dependent children and adults. The Department licenses nursing homes, foster homes for children and adults, drug treatment centers and other programs.

It is important to note that DCF often does NOT provide services directly, but contracts with for-profit or not for profit providers for housing arrangements for its clients.

Community-Based Care is the Florida Department of Children & Families' overarching strategy to build partnerships in the community, and to positively and significantly impact the outcomes, quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of services in the community. Nationally, there is increased attention to the benefits of a seamless system of services that is community-based, outcome driven, and family focused providing individualized culturally competent service plans for the child and family. This global concern for improved access and enhanced quality through management of outcomes has produced stellar projects. These programs show that children and their families respond more positively with longer lasting outcomes when the services are provided in the community where they live and as close to home as possible.

As of July 1, 2003, contracting group care for dependent children has been transferred from the Department of Children and Families to the designated lead agency for Broward and Palm Beach Counties: ChildNet.

ChildNet, Who We Are...

We are Advocates ...

At ChildNet, we bring together every resource at our disposal to promote the safety and best interest of each child in our care.

We are Leaders ...

ChildNet has been selected to serve as the lead agency to manage Broward and Palm Beach Counties' child welfare system. We fulfill this role in cooperation with a skilled network of service providers and extensive community involvement.

We are Community-Based ...

ChildNet is guided by a board of community leaders, prominent in supporting child welfare issues. Decisions are based on the needs of children in the communities we serve.

We are Focused ...

ChildNet is a private, not for profit organization. Our sole focus is to promote the safety and best interests of children and families in the communities we serve.

We are ChildNet ...

Our mission is to protect abused, abandoned and neglected children in the communities we serve.



Broward County
1100 W. McNab Road,
Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33309

Palm Beach County
4100 Okeechobee Blvd.,
West Palm Beach, Florida 33409

www.ChildNet.us

A History of Community-Based Residential Facilities

Following World War II, evidence began to suggest that people often can be helped to overcome developmental, emotional and intellectual deficits if given the appropriate opportunities to do so. Thus, community day programs and outpatient clinics were developed for people who otherwise would have been placed in institutions. These programs and clinics demonstrated that most people could receive more appropriate care in the community than they could in an institution.

With the development of community alternatives came the philosophy of “normalization.” This philosophy maintains that people do best when they remain in as normal an environment as possible. As a reflection of this social philosophy, judicial decisions were made that required government to treat institutionalized people so as to facilitate their return to society. Further, case law was developing that indicated that if confinement was necessary, it must be in the least restrictive setting possible.

The policies of deinstitutionalization and diversion are based on the premise that less restrictive residential settings afford greater opportunity for individualized activities and freedom of choice for residents. Significant evidence demonstrates that institutional care can produce side effects that are often more debilitating than the disorder. Isolation, lack of motivation, dependency and loss of basic social skills have all been seen as the result of institutional placement.

Community-based programs work closely with existing community resources and usually have an informal administrative structure. Community-based programs offer services that facilitate family interaction, give greater access to employment opportunities and increase chance for moving into more independent living or home care. Implicit in the social policy of developing community-based residential facilities are the assumptions that:

- **The individual's ability to cope with the environment will be increased** as his or her ability to control the environment is increased;
- Coping with the environment becomes more effective as increasingly complex behaviors are mastered or regained; and,
- Successful coping with the environment is a function of the degree to which the individual assimilates or re-assimilates cultural standards.

It is helpful at this point to clarify “normalization principle” and “least restrictive environment.” The normalization principle does not imply that clients will become normal in all cases. It simply means that the more a person with special living needs is exposed to the normal environment of society, the more likely the person is to reach a higher level of functioning. Each individual is given structured opportunities to grow to his or her **highest level of ability**. **Some people just cannot compete in today's highly complex and technological society.** However, they can often learn the necessary behavior to cope with the expectations of society and frequently obtain and maintain meaningful employment.

The term “least restrictive environment” is related to the normalization principle. While the legislature has mandated that DCF clients be placed in the least restrictive environment possible,” for some people this means placement in an institution or confinement. For most persons, however, it means living in their own homes, in foster or group homes or in apartments with greater to lesser restrictions as appropriate to meet the individual programmatic needs of residents. For some physically disabled people, a beautiful ranch style home could be too restrictive if it has architectural barriers that prevent moving from place to place in the home or getting into the bathroom.

Simply put, both terms, “normalization” and “least restrictive environment,” must apply to the specific disabilities of the individual and to the degree with which the individual is able to cope with them. *Neither concept provides a license for persons to be placed in settings that are not suitable to their personal needs.* For some, too much freedom can be as detrimental as too little.

Use of Community Residential Homes

The 1975 Florida Legislature indicated in the HRS Reorganization Act (s.20.19, Florida Statutes) that a stated departmental goal is to “prevent or reduce inappropriate institutional care by providing for community-based care, home-based care, or other forms of less intensive care.”

Group and adult foster homes are designed to provide the most homelike environment consistent with a person’s needs. The ideal residence is usually a person’s own home. That is where most DCF clients live, whether mentally ill, elderly, delinquent or dependent or developmentally disabled. But when a person cannot live at home, the choices are: foster homes; small group homes; or large group homes.

Some persons will remain in group homes for the rest of their lives. However, it should be stressed that many who once lived in foster and group homes have gone on to greater independence and higher productivity. When clients must live outside their own homes, ChildNet will try to place them in their own communities. This will allow clients to remain in as familiar an environment as possible and interact with their families and friends as much as possible.

The strength and character of a community can, in part, be measured by the willingness to assume responsibility for its citizens who cannot care for themselves. In a time of competition for limited dollars, it is important that all governing bodies see themselves as part of one community – the State of Florida – in the orderly development of group and foster care facilities.

Characteristics of Community Residential Homes

The characteristics of group homes vary considerably, depending on the type of residents in each home. Staffing requirements are dependent on residents’ needs. Group homes may be operated by not for profit organizations, private for-profit corporations or the state.