

Religious Exemption from Licensure Renewal Process

A Religious Exempt provider is required to notify the Department of the operation of a child care facility under the religious exemption allowance of s. 402.316, F.S. As part of the notification process, we request the following information be submitted annually:

- Religious Exemption from Licensure Notification Form.
- Copy of current accreditation certificate or membership verification from an organization that has published health and safety standards.
- A letter of verification of church affiliation on church letterhead which is signed and dated by the head church or parochial school official affirming that the child care facility is an integral part of the church or parochial school conducting regularly scheduled classes, courses of study, or educational programs. The letter must include a description of the relationship that exists between child care facility and the church/parochial school. This letter needs to be notarized and is only required at renewal if there has been a change from the previous year.
- A notarized Affidavit of Compliance Background Screening Requirements for Family Foster Care Home, Child Caring Agencies, Child Placing Agencies and Child Care Personnel. (Form CF-FSP 5218).
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30 Day Reminder of Operation Verification (Email Notification)

- An email is sent to the program director/contact person 30 days prior to the expiration of the DCF religious exemption. The accrediting association will be copied on this notice.
- The email informs the provider of the upcoming expiration date and includes instructions for providing updated information for the Notification process.

15 Day Reminder of Operation Verification (Email and/or Telephone Notification)

- If the information has not been received 15 days before the expiration of the DCF religious exemption, the program specialist will contact the program director/contact person.
- The program specialist will then send follow up by sending an email to the provider documenting the telephone call and providing a summary of the requirements previously provided. All telephone call records and email correspondence with the provider become a part of the providers file. The accrediting association will be copied on the email.

Program Specialist

- When a Religious Exemption from Licensure Notification is received and no DCF ID number is provided on the Notification, the program specialist will search the Childcare Administration, Regulation, and Enforcement System (CARES) to determine if the program currently holds a license or exemption from licensure.
- If the facility is listed in the web portal as “Exempt”, treat it as a renewal.
- The program specialist will review the Notification and supporting documentation to confirm that the operation of a child care facility meets the requirements of s. 402.316, F.S., which includes being an integral part of a church or parochial schools conducting regularly scheduled classes, etc., and that the facility holds a current, recognized accreditation or membership certificate from an organization that publishes and requires compliance with its standards for health, safety, and sanitation.

- The program specialist will verify that the facility has been issued an OCA and ORI number to ensure compliance with background screening requirements and that the provider is actively screening employees.
- The child care facility information is updated in CARES and the exemption is renewed for another year.

Confirming Notification of Religious Exemption from Licensure Operation

- Send email with “Notice of Religious Exemption from Licensure Confirmation” letter (.pdf) attached.
- In the email subject line, include facility name, DCF ID number and the title of document.
- Email content includes a statement for the provider to review the important document attached regarding the notification of their religious exemption from licensure. The provider will also be advised to submit a copy of their new accreditation certificate when it is issued.
- Copy the Regional Safety Program Manager, the regional licensing supervisor, the accrediting association, and the appropriate Early Learning Coalition (if applicable).

Incomplete Religious Exemption from Licensure Notification

Contact the facility director via email to provide necessary technical assistance regarding the missing, incomplete, or incorrect information. Copy the accrediting association on this notice.

If the requested documentation is not received by the expiration date of the DCF religious exemption, the facility will be closed in CARES and the program director/contact person will be notified of the closure in the Department’s records via email. The Regional Safety Program Manager, the regional licensing supervisor, the accrediting association, and the Early Learning Coalition will be notified as well (if applicable).

No Religious Exemption from Licensure Notification Received

In the event that a Notification is not received by the program specialist prior to the DCF religious exemption expiration date, the facility will be closed in CARES, and the program director/contact person will be notified via email. The Regional Safety Program Manager, the regional licensing supervisor, the accrediting agency, and the Early Learning Coalition will be notified as well (if applicable).