



HENRY McMASTER, GOVERNOR
MICHAEL LEACH, STATE DIRECTOR

Thank you for your interest in becoming licensed by the South Carolina Department of Social Services (SCDSS) as a Residential Group Care Facility for Children. According to § 63-11-30 of the South Carolina Code of Laws (as amended), SCDSS is the agency mandated to license these facilities for children for the State of South Carolina. To become a licensed provider, you will need to explore several areas, including the building where the children/youth will reside, the type of program services you plan to offer, the population of children you will serve and how you will fund your program. There are many steps in the licensing process, some of which require approval from other regulatory state agencies [i.e. State Fire Marshal's Office, Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), etc.]. The following information is provided to help you as you explore your decision to become a licensed provider of residential services for children:

RESEARCH (NEED and FUNDING):

The first step is researching the needs of your community and potential referral sources. Decide what kind of program you plan to offer and the children you plan to serve, then use these decisions to help you in developing and writing your policy and procedures, personnel manual, resident handbook, and in securing future funding sources. Currently, state agencies do not offer any start-up funds. SCDSS licenses programs with a variety of funding streams. Some group homes are funded 100% through private funds; others may be under contract with a single state agency or you may choose to provide services under a multi-agency solicitation. It is crucial that you identify your funding sources as you begin to work towards becoming licensed.

BUILDING:

This is a very important step that may help you decide whether to proceed with your plans to open a group care facility for children. You must *have a building* (whether purchasing or constructing) and ensure that it will comply with the licensing regulations, zoning and building requirements, fire codes, and health and safety regulations prior to a license being issued. It is imperative that you have a building that can be inspected and approved by DSS, the State Fire Marshal's office (not local) and the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC). We strongly urge you to contact the State Fire Marshal's office early in the process to discuss fire codes and any necessary requirements (approval of your architectural or professional design plans, etc.) that need to be considered concerning the building(s) **prior** to any on-site inspections of the property. You can contact the State Fire Marshal's office at **(803) 896-9800**. Later in the process, your assigned licensing consultant will request fire inspections and health and sanitation inspections from the State Fire Marshal's Office and DHEC.

REGULATIONS:

Please read and familiarize yourself with the copy of the Regulations for Residential Group Care Facilities for Children that is enclosed. These regulations that were recently revised went into effect on September 12, 2021. During the operation of your facility, you will be required to meet and follow these regulations, all of the conditions and specifications of your license, and other applicable State and Federal laws [e.g., Interstate Compact for the Placement of Children (ICPC), American with Disabilities Act, etc.]. For additional information on ICPC, please go to <http://icpc.aphsa.org/Home/about.asp>. Once you have completed the licensing process, the SCDSS will issue a Standard license effective for two years from the date of issuance or renewal unless revoked or otherwise terminated. SCDSS will monitor your facility by making regular announced and unannounced visits to ensure compliance with the regulations. During monitoring visits, your licensing consultant will tour the facility, audit a percentage of files (children and staff), and address any other concerns or regulatory issues. Fire inspections are required annually and will be requested each year by your licensing consultant.

✚ BACKGROUND CHECKS:

§ 63-7-2350 of the South Carolina Code of Laws (as amended) and the Regulations for Residential Group Care Organizations prohibit employment of a person or the foster care placement of a child with any person who has a substantiated history of child abuse or neglect (i.e. an indicated or founded case of child abuse or neglect as determined by the Department of Social Services). State law also prohibits the employment of a person or the foster care placement of a child with any person who has a criminal history pertaining to an offense against a person, an offense against morality or decency, contributing to the delinquency of a minor or a felony drug-related offense. Central Registry (DSS Form 3072) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) fingerprint-based criminal record background checks for all employees must be completed within twelve months prior to the issuance date of your license. The FBI check will include a South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED) background check. Employers will only receive a non-excludable letter or notification of excludable convictions. South Carolina Sex Offender Checks and a check of the National Sex Offender Registry (NSOR) are required (form enclosed). See enclosure for additional instructions.

✚ FEES:

You will find a fee collection document enclosed for reference. Below are the required fees relative to licensing as a residential group care facility:

Description	Fee	Billing
Initial licensing of facility providing services to 9 children or less	\$250.00	SCDSS will bill you for the appropriate fee based on your license request after your packet has been submitted and approved.
Initial licensing of facility providing services to 10 children or more	\$500.00	SCDSS will bill you for the appropriate fee based on your license request after your packet has been submitted and approved.
Central Registry Checks for each employee	\$8.00 non-profit \$25.00 for-profit	See DSS Form 3072 for instructions on payment procedures.
DHEC	\$60.00	SCDSS will bill you after DHEC conducts the inspection of your facility.

Thank you again for your interest in providing services for children. Enclosed is a table that lists the required forms and documents and an explanation for each item. Completing these will make up your licensing application. While this packet contains a large amount of information and a number of forms, the group home licensing staff will be happy to assist you as you work to provide the materials listed. If you have any questions or need further assistance, please call the Group Home/Child Placing Agency licensing unit at (803) 898-7837 and request to speak to a supervisor.

Enclosures