

The LOCATE: Child Care Complaint Policy

Each year, the Resource Center publishes the *LOCATE Complaint Policy* so that the provider community is informed of the policy.

Through the LOCATE service, parents share feedback with the LOCATE staff on the programs in the files: licensed day care centers, registered family day care providers and accredited preschools. While this feedback is at times positive, it sometimes concerns complaints parents have about child caregivers. Of course, LOCATE and the Maryland Child Care Resource Network want to use this information in a way that is fair to providers and parents, while protecting children, as well.

Therefore, the LOCATE Complaint Policy was developed and has been in effect since its approval by the Maryland Committee for Children Board in November, 1983. According to this policy, all complaints made to LOCATE about child care providers/facilities are recorded. The type of complaint is then determined:

- Less Serious Complaint - No Violation: complaints that do not involve violations of child care regulations; complaints about situations which do not pose a threat to the safety, health or welfare of a child.
- Less Serious Complaint Involving Violation: complaints of any violation of the Office of Child Care (OCC) and/or Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) regulations, which do not pose a threat to the health, safety, or welfare of a child.
- Serious Complaint: any threat to the immediate health, safety, or welfare of a child.

When a parent calls LOCATE with a complaint, the counselor advises him/her to register the complaint directly with the appropriate regulatory agency and/or Child Protective Services. Names and telephone numbers of the person with whom the parent should speak are provided.

When a Serious Complaint is received concerning one of the providers or facilities in the LOCATE system, no referrals are made, by the counselors, to that provider/facility. The LOCATE Director also communicates with the appropriate regulatory agency personnel about the complaint, and maintains the "hold" on the provider's/facility's record until the agency's disposition of the complaint is known. Should the investigation result in no action, the "hold" status is removed from that provider's/facility's record. Should the license or registration be revoked, the record is removed from the LOCATE files. Providers are advised of LOCATE's actions in writing.

A provider may appeal the LOCATE Director's decision to cease referrals. Appeals are first addressed to the LOCATE Advisory Committee. Final appeals may be made to the board of the Maryland Family Network. It is the position of LOCATE and MFN that the Complaint Policy is both fair and workable. Safeguards and due process are afforded to the caregivers in the files, and parents' and children's rights to safety are addressed as well.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Laura Terrell, Director of LOCATE, at (301) 772-8420, ext. 214.