

**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES  
CHILD CARE ADMINISTRATION  
311 WEST SARATOGA STREET  
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201**

**DATE:** August 1, 1999

**CIRCULAR LETTER #:** 99-02

**TO:** Regional Managers, Licensing Supervisors, Licensing Specialists,  
Family Child Care Providers

**FROM:** Linda Heisner, Executive Director  
Child Care Administration

**RE:** Unannounced Inspections (Registration Off-Year)

**PROGRAMS AFFECTED:** Family child care homes

**ORIGINATING OFFICE:** Child Care Administration  
Office of Licensing

**PURPOSE:** Establish guidelines for implementing House Bill (HB) 299, which  
requires unannounced inspections of family child care homes in  
addition to initial registration and registration renewal inspections.

**AUTHORITY:** Family Law Article § 5-551(c), as amended by HB 299 (Chapter  
410, Laws of 1999).

**ACTION REQUIRED OF:** Regional Licensing Staff

**REQUIRED ACTION:** Conduct an unannounced inspection of each registered family  
child care home during any year in which the initial registration  
inspection or a registration renewal inspection has not occurred.

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** October 1, 1999

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:** Child Care Administration  
Office of Licensing  
410-767-7805

**Circular Letter CCA # 99-02**  
**Page 2 of 5**

**BACKGROUND**

On May 13, 1999, Governor Glendening signed House Bill (HB) 299 into law. This legislation requires the Department of Human Resources to conduct an unannounced inspection of each registered family child care home during any year that the home is not inspected for initial registration or registration renewal purposes. The legislation is intended to provide unscheduled assessments by the Department of each home's ability to meet basic child safety and supervision requirements.

**DEFINITIONS**

1. For each registered family child care home, "off-year" means any calendar year during which the initial or a renewed certificate of registration is not issued.
2. "Off-year inspection" means an unannounced inspection conducted pursuant to HB 299.

**PROCEDURES**

1. Off-Year Inspection Scheduling Methodology:
  - (a) Because initial application and registration renewal inspections typically occur within 30-60 days prior to issuance of a registration certificate, the CCA Office of Licensing considers the date of issuance to be equivalent to the date of inspection for the purpose of implementing the requirements of HB 299.
  - (b) Each CCA Regional Office shall arrange for each family day care home within its jurisdiction to have an unannounced inspection during each of the home's registration off-years.
  - (c) For each home, the unannounced inspection may occur at any time during the off-year.
2. Off-Year Inspection Guidelines:
  - (a) An off-year inspection is not intended to be a complete review of a provider's compliance with all applicable family day care requirements, such as occurs at an initial or a renewal inspection. Instead, it is intended to be an observational assessment of the home's safety, the adequacy and appropriateness of child supervision, and the general well-being of the children in care at the time of inspection. It is also intended as an additional opportunity for CCA licensing staff to provide technical assistance and disseminate information pertinent to child care issues. However, a complete compliance review (including a review of all provider and child records) may occur if a situation or condition is observed or reported which indicates a significant risk to child health or safety.
  - (b) During each off-year inspection, the licensing specialist shall review specified compliance areas which are immediately related to child safety and supervision. These areas are marked with an asterisk (\*) on the inspection form. However, if a noncompliance is observed or reported in another compliance area, the licensing specialist shall also record it on the inspection form. All noncompliances must be corrected by the provider.
  - (c) Inspection findings shall be documented on a modified version of the form (DHR/CCA 356) currently used for initial and renewal inspections (see pages 3-5 of this Circular Letter for a sample of the form).