

DOCUMENTATION FOR CERTIFICATION OF PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

Section 63.2-1717 of the Code of Virginia provides for the certification of preschool programs operated by an accredited private school. These programs are exempt from licensure if they comply with the requirements of Subsection B, Subsection C or Subsection D of this section of the Code and submit specific documentation. The attached information serves to explain the required documentation.

The law requires all private schools seeking certification of preschool programs to file required information on forms designated by the Commissioner of Social Services. Copies of the required forms are included along with a checklist to help you account for this information needed to initiate your certification. Please read the detailed explanation of the documentation requirements carefully to prevent delays in processing certification materials.

It is also important that you respond to this information promptly. Extreme delays in filing certification materials may cause items of required documentation submitted initially, e.g., building, health and fire safety inspection verification, to expire before all other required documentation is received. Similarly, staff turnover and enrollment changes may occur while certification is delayed, requiring the submission of new or revised documentation to reflect such changes.

Since certification documentation must be submitted annually, the required forms will be provided to you annually with a renewal certification packet. This packet will be sent to you 60-90 days before the expiration of your current certification. Although an extra copy will be provided upon request, you are primarily responsible for making copies of these forms as needed. Please fill in the appropriate information and return these forms to your local regional licensing office. Office locations can be found online at:

<http://www.dss.virginia.gov/division/license/district.html>

The following documentation is required to be filed before the beginning of the school year or calendar year and annually thereafter:

1. **Accreditation or Accreditation Candidacy Verification Form:** (i.e., documentary evidence that the school is accredited or has initiated the accreditation process in accordance with § 63.2-1717, Subsections A and F of the Code of Virginia); **this form must be completed, signed, and dated by the Executive Director of the accrediting organization.**

The Commissioner may issue a provisional certificate to a private school that has provided documentation to the regional licensing office that it has initiated the accreditation process. Provisional certification allows the school to operate a preschool program during the accreditation process period without being subject to licensure. According to Code requirements, the issuance of a provisional certification shall be for a period not to exceed

one year. A provisional certificate may be renewed up to an additional year if the accrediting organization provides a statement indicating it has visited the school within the previous six months and the school has made sufficient progress.

If such a school completes the accreditation process before the expiration date of the provisional certificate, the school may submit the accreditation verification form to the regional licensing office for issuance of regular certification. The regional office shall issue certification to the school once the accreditation verification form is received. The issuance date of the regular certification shall be retroactive to that of the current provisional certificate and the regular certification shall expire a year from this issuance date.

If a school fails to complete the accreditation process or is denied accreditation, the provisional certification shall be revoked and the preschool program shall thereafter be subject to licensure.

2. **Compliance Statement of Required Documentation Form:** **This form must be signed and dated by the school administrator** and shall include verification of the following documentation:

- A statement of the school's intent to begin or continue to operate a certified preschool program, which includes the maximum enrollment capacity at any one time and the age range of children participating in the program, and acknowledges whether the school meets the requirements of either Subsection B, Subsection C or Subsection D of § 63.2-1717 of the Code of Virginia.
- Documentation that the parents, guardians or persons having charge of a child enrolled in the school's preschool program have been provided written notification that the preschool program is exempt from licensure;
- Documentation that the parents, guardians or persons having charge of a child enrolled in the school's preschool program have been provided written notification of the following information, which is also available to the general public: the school facility is in compliance with the applicable laws and regulations relating to food services, health and sanitation, water supply, building codes, the Statewide Fire Prevention Code or the Uniform Statewide Building Code, the preschool program's maximum enrollment capacity, the school's policy or practices for pupil-teacher ratio, staffing patterns and staff health requirements, and a description of the school's public liability insurance, if any;

(This document may be in the form of a letter, pamphlet, handbook or newsletter. There should be verifiable evidence that the document is available to the general public. The approved maximum enrollment at any one time will be on the certification letter issued by the Commissioner of Social Services.)

Public liability insurance is generally required in the event that someone brings suit against the preschool program for personal or bodily harm suffered as a result of negligence during the program's normal hours of operation. Most public liability insurance policies provide a minimum coverage of \$300,000. The policy number and expiration date of the school's public liability insurance coverage is required on this compliance statement, if the school's accrediting association requires liability insurance. Each staff employed by the preschool program must comply with the pupil-teacher ratio, staffing patterns and health requirements established by the school's accreditation organization.

- Documentary evidence that the private school requires all employees of the preschool, and other school employees who have contact with the children enrolled in the preschool program, to obtain a criminal record check as provided in subdivision A 11 of § 19.2-386 as a condition of initial or continued employment. The school shall not hire or continue employment to any such person who has an offense as specified in § 63.2-1719 of the Code of Virginia; and
 - A list of the qualifications of school personnel who work in the preschool program including their job titles, education, training, experience and/or skills is required to be attached to this compliance statement.
3. Checklist of Subsections B, C and D or Section 63.2-1717: The school must confirm whether the preschool program it operates is in compliance with the requirements of Subsection B, Subsection C or Subsection D by checking all items applicable to the program. If all items in Subsection B or D are not checked, the program shall be subject to licensure. **The form must be signed and dated by the school administrator.**
 4. Building, Health and Fire Safety Inspection Verification Form: (i.e., documentary evidence that the physical facility in which the preschool program will be conducted has been inspected before initial certification by the local building official and within the twelve-month period prior to initial certification and at least annually thereafter by the local health department, and local fire marshal or Office of the State Fire Marshal, and inspection reports confirm the facility is in compliance with applicable laws and regulations relating to food service, health and sanitation, water supply, building codes, and the Statewide Fire Prevention Code or the Uniform Statewide Building Code). **The building, health and fire safety reports are not required to be returned with the certification documentation. Only the verification form is required to be returned, and must be signed and dated by the school administrator.**

Health Inspection Report: The physical facility of the preschool program must be inspected and approved annually by an official from your local health department. An inspection must have been completed within the prior calendar year. Call your local health department to request an inspection. You should request a copy of the completed report with the date of inspection from the inspecting health official. This report is to be maintained in the school's records.

Fire Inspection Report: The physical facility of the preschool program must be inspected annually by an inspector from an authorized Fire Prevention Bureau or by the Office of the State Fire Marshall. You may contact the regional Office of the State Fire Marshall representing your locality to determine who has jurisdiction to perform this inspection. A copy of this completed report with the date of inspection should be requested from the inspecting fire official and maintained in the school's records.

CHECKLIST OF REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

Name of Preschool: _____

Capacity: _____ Age Range: _____

Date Submitted:

- _____ 1. Accreditation or Accreditation Candidacy Verification
- _____ 2. Compliance Statement of Required Documentation, including list of staff qualifications
- _____ 3. Checklist of Subsections B, C and D of § 63.2-1717
- _____ 4. Building, Health and Fire Safety Inspection Verification

ACCREDITATION VERIFICATION FORM

This form hereby confirms that _____
(Name of Private School)

located at _____

is accredited by _____
(Accrediting Organization)

The organization is one of the accrediting organizations listed in § 63.2-1717 of the Code of Virginia and is recognized by the Board of Education, or is a statewide accrediting organization recognized by the Board of Education.

Executive Director of Accrediting Organization

Date

Note:
§ 63.1717 of the Code of Virginia allows a preschool or nursery school program operated by a private school accredited by a statewide accrediting organization recognized by the Board of Education or a private school or preschool that offers to preschool-aged children a program accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children’s National Academy of Early Childhood Programs; the Association of Christian Schools International; the American Association of Christian Schools; the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation; the National Accreditation Council for Early Childhood Professional Personnel and Programs; the International Academy for Private Education; Standards for the American Montessori Society Accreditation; the International Accreditation and Certification of Childhood Educators, Programs, and Trainers; or the National Accreditation Commission and is recognized by the Board of Education, to be exempt from licensure if program complies with certain requirements.

ACCREDITATION CANDIDACY VERIFICATION FORM

This form hereby confirms that _____
(Name of Private School)

located at _____

is a candidate for accreditation by _____
(Accrediting Organization)

The organization is one of the accrediting organizations listed in § 63.2-1717 of the Code of Virginia and is recognized by the Board of Education; or is a statewide accrediting organization recognized by the Board of Education. It is expected that

_____ will complete the
(Name of Private School)

accreditation process _____
(Approximate Month and Year)

Executive Director of Accrediting Organization

Date

Note:

§ 63.1717 of the Code of Virginia allows a preschool or nursery school program operated by a private school accredited by a statewide accrediting organization recognized by the Board of Education or a private school or preschool that offers to preschool-aged children a program accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children's National Academy of Early Childhood Programs; the Association of Christian Schools International; the American Association of Christian Schools; the National Early Childhood Program Accreditation; the National Accreditation Council for Early Childhood Professional Personnel and Programs; the International Academy for Private Education; Standards for the American Montessori Society Accreditation; the International Accreditation and Certification of Childhood Educators, Programs, and Trainers; or the National Accreditation Commission and is recognized by the Board of Education, to be exempt from licensure if the program complies with certain requirements.

COMPLIANCE STATEMENT OF REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

_____ has a
(Name of the School)
maximum enrollment of _____ students and intends to operate a certified
preschool program for _____ (maximum enrollment) children at
any one time in the age range of _____ through _____. This school
meets the requirements of Subsection B ___/ Subsection C ___/ Subsection D ___ of

§ 63.2-1717 of the Code of Virginia. The parents, guardians or persons having charge of a child enrolled in the school's preschool program have been provided written notification that the preschool program is exempt from licensure. In addition, the parents, guardians or persons having charge of a child enrolled in the school's preschool program have been provided written notification of the following: the school facility is in compliance with applicable laws and regulations relating to food services, health and sanitation, water supply, building codes, the Statewide Fire Prevention Code or the Uniform Statewide Building Code, the preschool program's maximum enrollment capacity, the school's policy or practice for pupil-teacher ratio, staffing patterns and staff health requirements, and a description of the school's public liability insurance, if any. A written statement of this notification is available to the general public.

The school's public liability insurance coverage policy number is _____,

and has an expiration date of _____.

(Complete only if accrediting organization requires public liability insurance).

_____ requires all employees of the preschool
(Name of the Private School)

program and other school employees who have contact with children enrolled in the program to obtain a criminal record check as a condition of initial or continued employment as provided in subdivision A 11 of §19.2-389 of the Code of Virginia. This school refuses to hire or continue to employ any person who has an offense specified in § 63.2-1719 of the Code of Virginia. A list of the qualifications of school staff who work in the preschool program including their job titles, education, training, experience and/or skills is attached to this statement.

I acknowledge that I am in receipt of, have read, and intend to comply with
§ 63.2-1717 of the Code of Virginia.

Signature of School Administrator

Date

CHECKLIST OF SUBSECTION B, C OR D OF § 63.2-1717

Place a check beside the item(s) applicable to your program to confirm it meets the requirements set forth in subsection B, subsection C or subsection D of § 63.2-1717 of the Code of Virginia.

SUBSECTION B

B. A school described in Subsection A shall meet the following conditions in order to be exempt from licensure under this subsection:

_____ 1. The school offers kindergarten or elementary school instructional programs that satisfy compulsory school attendance laws, and children below the age of compulsory school attendance also participate in such instructional programs;

_____ 2. The instructional programs for children of and below the age of eligibility for school attendance share (i) a specific verifiable common pedagogy, (ii) educational materials, (iii) methods of instruction, and (iv) professional training and individual teacher certification standards, all of which are required by a state-recognized accrediting organization;

_____ 3. The instructional programs described in subdivision 1 and 2 have mixed age groups of three-year-old to six-year-old children and the number of pupils in the preschool program does not exceed fifteen pupils for each instructional adult.

_____ 4. The instructional programs contemplate a three-to-four-year learning cycle under a common pedagogy; and

_____ 5. Children below the age of eligibility for kindergarten attendance do not attend the instructional programs for more than four hours per day.

SUBSECTION C

C. A school described in Subsection A shall be exempt from licensure if it meets the following conditions under this subsection:

_____ 1. It maintains an enrollment ratio at any one time during the current school year of five children age five or above to one four year old child as long as no child in attendance is under age four and the number of pupils in the preschool program does not exceed twelve pupils for each instructional adult.

SUBSECTION D

D. A private school or preschool described in Subsection A shall meet the following conditions in order to be exempt under this section:

_____ 1. The school offers instructional classes and has been in operation since January 1984.

_____ 2. The school does not hold itself out as a child care center, child day center or child day program.

_____ 3. Children enrolled in the school are at least three years of age and do not attend more that (i) three hours per day and (ii) five days a week.

_____ 4. The enrolled children attend only one program offered by the school per day.

_____ 5. The school maintains a certificate or permit issued pursuant to a local government ordinance that addresses health, safety and welfare of the children, such as but not limited to space requirements, and requires annual inspections.

Signature of School Administrator

Date

BUILDING, HEALTH AND FIRE SAFETY INSPECTION VERIFICATION FORM

The physical facility of _____,
(Preschool Program)

located at _____, was

inspected by a local building official, _____
(Official's Name)

on _____, by a local health department official
(Date of Inspection)

_____ on _____,
(Official's Name) (Date of Inspection)

and by a local fire department official or the State Fire Marshal,

_____ on _____.
(Official's Name) (Date of Inspection)

The building, health and fire safety inspections reports confirm that the physical facility of the preschool program is in compliance with applicable laws and regulations relating to food service, health and sanitation, water supply, building codes, and the Statewide Fire Prevention Code or the Uniform Statewide Building Code.

School Administrator

Date