



## **Old Dominion Association of Church Schools**

### **ODACS Update on Three Recent VDOE Memos for Church-run Preschools and Daycares**

January 28, 2026

Dear Pastors and Administrators,

In December and January, VDOE has sent three memos to Religiously Exempt preschools and daycares. ODACS has studied the three memos and has been receiving some questions regarding them. Following is a brief statement on each of the memos. By way of reminder, the three memos are attached to this update.

#### **1. Updated Food Service Guidelines; Memo Dated December 18, 2025**

On December 18, the Virginia Department of Education sent a memo informing our ministries that the Virginia Department of Health has issued new regulations regarding what kinds of food a childcare center may serve if the center does not have a food establishment permit. This memo was directed to Religiously Exempt preschools and daycares, among other kinds of centers. ODACS has several observations about the memo.

- According to the memo, the VDH regulations took effect in 2021, but VDOE had just learned about them.
- To our knowledge, none of our ministries has been notified of the new regulations by VDH.
- The memo came from VDOE instead of from VDH. However, VDOE did include a link to a VDH letter to child day center operators, dated November 21, 2025. A copy of that letter is also attached to this update.

ODACS has had lengthy conversations with two of our ministries regarding how this information might affect their preschools. Because the food service situations at the two ministries were quite different, the conversations were not exactly the same, though some of the ODACS advice was the same.

*ODACS prefers NOT to publicly post specific advice in response to the memo. However, please feel free to contact ODACS if you feel that you need some guidance about how to understand and respond to the memo.*

#### **2. Training on General Procedures for Licensure; Memo Dated December 23, 2025**

Because this memo applies only to licensed centers, our church-run preschools and daycares may feel free to disregard it. In the memo, VDOE invites other centers, including Religiously Exempt centers, to participate in the training. In the opinion of ODACS, the purpose of the invitation is to try to persuade Religiously Exempt centers to become licensed.

### 3. Virginia Preservice Training; Memo Dated January 20, 2026

This memo notifies childcare providers of updates to the Virginia Preservice Training program. The updates are in response to HB 1024, passed during the 2024 General Assembly, which directs VDOE to separate preservice training into age-appropriate categories.<sup>1</sup> Here are important facts for our ODACS ministries to understand about this training.

- The training is required for subsidy vendors and for licensed centers. It is *not* required for Religiously Exempt Centers that operate without taxpayer subsidies.<sup>2</sup>
- People who work in Religiously Exempt centers are allowed to take the training if they choose to do so.
- While taking the state's training is not required, ODACS does advise our church-run preschools and daycares to require training for their staff. The completion of the training should be documented in each employee's personnel file.
- ODACS has been making an effort to provide professional growth opportunities for our preschool teachers at the annual ODACS Educators' Convention and will continue to work to provide a robust early childhood track at future conventions. We encourage you to bring your teachers to that event and to document in their personnel files their participation in any of the early childhood workshops.<sup>3</sup>
- *Always keep in mind that, since your preschool and daycare operate without a license and without the use of taxpayer subsidies, the only requirements that apply to your preschool and daycare are those found in Virginia Code. There are no extra VDOE regulations that apply. If a VDOE memo or a VDOE licensing inspector seem to be requiring something that is not included in the Religious Exemption Code section, they are either mistaken, or they are exceeding their legal authority.*<sup>4</sup>

As always, please feel free to contact the ODACS office if you have any questions about the Religious Exemption or if you encounter any problems with a VDOE licensing office.

<sup>1</sup> <https://legacylis.virginia.gov/cgi-bin/legp604.exe?241+sum+HB1024>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.childcare.virginia.gov/providers/training-and-professional-development>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.vaodacs.com/workshop-presenters-and-topics/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://law.lis.virginia.gov/vacode/title22.1/chapter14.1/section22.1-289.031/>

Sincerely,

Dan Zacharias  
Executive Director

**From:** Virginia Department of Education VDOE@public.govdelivery.com  
**Subject:** Updated Food Service Guidelines for Child Day Centers that Do Not Hold a Food Establishment Permit from the Virginia Department of Health  
**Date:** December 18, 2025 at 9:02 AM  
**To:** vaodacs@icloud.com



**OFFICE OF CHILD CARE HEALTH AND SAFETY**  
**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**



**DATE:** December 18, 2025

**TO:** Licensed Child Day Centers, Licensed Short-Term Child Day Centers, Religiously Exempt Child Day Centers, Certified Preschools, Exempt Out-of-School Time Programs, Filing Exempt Programs, and Unlicensed Center-Based Subsidy Providers

**FROM:** Jeffrey S. Williams, Assistant Superintendent, Child Care Health and Safety

**SUBJECT:** Updated Food Service Guidelines for Child Day Centers that Do Not Hold a Food Establishment Permit from the Virginia Department of Health

This memo is to alert child day centers operating without a food establishment permit of changes per the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) related to which foods may be served to children in care. The Virginia Department of Education recently learned that in 2021, the VDH rescinded the 1994 policy implementation memo, "Guidelines for Snack Food Service in Care Facilities," thereby limiting food items that may be served by nonpermitted centers. Child day centers that do not hold a VDH food permit are limited to serving commercially prepared, individually packaged non temperature-controlled foods such as individually packaged animal crackers, pretzels and granola bars.

Please refer to the memo below from the VDH for more information about this change. [Guidelines for food service not requiring a VDH food permit](#) and additional information related to food service requirements can be found on the [Food Safety in Virginia – Environmental Health website](#).

If you have any questions or need assistance after reading the memo below from the VDH, please contact your [local health department](#).

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- [VDH Non Food Permit Memo to Child Day Centers\\_2025](#)(PDF)

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## COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

Karen Shelton, MD  
State Health Commissioner

Department of Health  
P O BOX 2448  
RICHMOND, VA 23218

TTY 7-1-1 OR  
1-800-828-1120

November 21, 2025

Dear Child Day Center Operators,

I am writing to you today to share information about food service in establishments that do not hold a Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Food Establishment permit. In the past, VDH published the *Guidelines for Snack Food Service in Care Facilities (Guidelines; 1994)* which outlined categories of foods, beverages, and processes which child day center providers could serve to children without requiring a VDH food permit. The VDH Food Regulations were amended in June 2021, and the *Guidelines* were rescinded as they were no longer in compliance with the VDH definition of a food establishment.

In the absence of a VDH Food Permit, under 12VAC5-421-10 "Definitions-Food Establishment," an establishment may serve commercially prepared, individually packaged non-TCS foods such as individually packaged animal crackers, pretzels, or granola bars. "TCS food" means a food that requires Time/temperature Control for Safety to be held at or below 41°F to limit the growth or formation of disease-causing germs or toxins. Some examples of TCS foods include dairy products, deli meats, and cut melon. Non-TCS foods are shelf-stable and do not require temperature control for safety.

Other options for food service include parents packing ready-to-eat meals which do not require heating or further preparation by staff and receiving individually pre-packaged meals from VDH permitted food establishments that are immediately served to the children after receipt. Ordering foods which require plating or dispensing by staff requires a VDH food permit.

Please visit [Food Safety in Virginia – Environmental Health](#) and click on "Food Service Not Requiring a Permit" for the guidelines for food service not requiring a VDH food permit. Please contact [foodsafety@vdh.virginia.gov](mailto:foodsafety@vdh.virginia.gov) if we can provide any assistance.

Thank you,

Olivia McCormick

Director

Division of Food and General Services

**From:** Virginia Department of Education VDOE@public.govdelivery.com  
**Subject:** Training on General Procedures for the Licensure of Child Day Programs and Family Day Systems and Background Checks, 8VAC20-821  
**Date:** December 23, 2025 at 11:47 AM  
**To:** vaodacs@icloud.com



**OFFICE OF CHILD CARE HEALTH AND SAFETY**  
**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**



**DATE:** December 23, 2025

**TO:** Licensed Child Day Centers, Licensed Short-Term Child Day Centers, Licensed Family Day Homes, Licensed Family Day Systems, Religiously Exempt Child Day Centers, Certified Preschools, Voluntarily Registered Family Day Homes, Center-Based Subsidy Providers, Home-Based Subsidy Providers, Exempt Out-of-School Time Programs, and Filing Exempt Programs

**FROM:** Jeffrey S. Williams, Assistant Superintendent, Child Care Health and Safety

**SUBJECT:** Training on General Procedures for the Licensure of Child Day Programs and Family Day Systems and Background Checks, 8VAC20-821

The final *General Procedures for the Licensure of Child Day Programs and Family Day Systems and Background Checks* regulation (8VAC20-821) was published in the Virginia Register of Regulations ([Volume 42, Issue 8](#)) on December 1, 2025. This publication initiated the final adoption period, which includes a minimum 30-day waiting period before the regulation becomes effective. The regulation is scheduled to take effect on February 1, 2026.

- The Department will provide comprehensive training to help you prepare for implementation of the new standards during the week of January 5, 2026.
- Virtual and in-person options will be offered. Registration is not required.
- The virtual session will be recorded and posted on the Department's website for those who are unable to attend an in-person or virtual session.

The full schedule is listed below:

**In-Person Session: Tuesday, January 6, 12-1 p.m.**

Location: [Handley Robinson Auditorium](#), 100 West Piccadilly Street,  
Winchester,  
Virginia 22601

virginia 22001

**In-Person Session: Wednesday, January 7, 12-1 p.m.**

Location: [Main Street Library](#), 110 Main Street, Newport News, Virginia 23601

**In-Person Session: Thursday, January 8, 12-1 p.m.**

Location: [Williamson Library](#), 3837 Williamson Road, Roanoke, Virginia 24012

**Virtual Session: Friday, January 9, 12-1 p.m.**

[Meeting link](#)

Meeting ID: 252 884 003 458 00

Passcode: Mh2C7bb9

Although the final *General Procedures for the Licensure of Child Day Programs and Family Day Systems and Background Checks* regulation (8VAC20-821) applies solely to licensed child day programs, licensed family day systems, and voluntarily registered family day homes, all child day programs may participate in the training. Participation is encouraged for any program that may seek licensure in the future.

More detailed information about the final *General Procedures for the Licensure of Child Day Programs and Family Day Systems and Background Checks* regulation (8VAC20-821) can be found in the [VDOE memo](#) previously distributed to child day programs and family day systems on December 1.

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- [Final- General Procedures and Background Checks Training Announcement](#)(PDF)

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**From:** Virginia Department of Education VDOE@public.govdelivery.com  
**Subject:** Virginia Preservice Training – Center-Based, School-Age Track Available  
**Date:** January 20, 2026 at 12:38 PM  
**To:** vaodacs@icloud.com



**OFFICE OF CHILD CARE HEALTH AND SAFETY**  
**VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**



**DATE:** January 20, 2026

**TO:** Licensed Child Day Centers, Religious Exempt Child Day Centers,  
Unlicensed Center-Based Subsidy Providers

**FROM:** Jeffrey S. Williams, Assistant Superintendent, Child Care Health and Safety

**SUBJECT:** Virginia Preservice Training – Center-Based, School-Age Track Available

This memo is to inform providers that updates to the Virginia Preservice Training for Child Care Staff will become available to providers in two phases; the first beginning on February 2, 2026. The training has been separated into age-appropriate categories, as required by [House Bill 1024](#), which passed in the 2024 General Assembly. Provider input for these courses was gathered through listening sessions in summer/fall of 2024 and feedback surveys listed in the Readiness Connections newsletter.

The updated preservice training now includes the following required courses:

- a foundations course for all staff (regardless of program type or age of children in care), and
- program and age specific courses (which will be based on the type of program a staff person works in and the ages of child with whom the staff person works).

The release of the foundations course and a center-based school-age course will be available on February 2, 2026. New staff who will only be working in a center with school-age children can begin taking these courses to meet the requirements for preservice training. The 10-hour preservice training will remain available for all other new staff who will be providing care in a family day home setting or care for children birth to five in a center. Age and program specific courses for these staff will be released on May 1, 2026. More information as well as links to the course registration page can be found on the [Training and Professional Development | Child Care VA](#) webpage on February 2, 2026.

**Course available February 2, 2026**



**Courses available on February 2, 2026:**

- Virginia Preservice: Foundations (All Child Care Staff); **3 hours**
- Virginia Preservice: Child Day Center (School-Age Care); **1.5 hours**

**Courses available on May 1, 2026:**

- Virginia Preservice: Child Day Center (Birth to Five Care); **3 hours**
- Virginia Preservice: Family Day Home Care; **3 hours**

\*Until these courses are available, new staff working in a family day home setting or in a center with children birth to five must continue to take the current 10-hour preservice training.

If you have any questions after reading this memo, please email [childcarelicensing@doe.virginia.gov](mailto:childcarelicensing@doe.virginia.gov).

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- [MEMO Preservice Center School-age training](#)(PDF)

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