The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Department of Early Education and Care

Exits and Evacuations in Family Child Care Programs	**Applicability: Licensed Family Child Care Programs**
Effective Date: January 29, 2013 Updated: May 8, 2024	

BACKGROUND

Accessible, clear, and easily identified exit routes are critical to ensuring that children and adults remain safe in the event of an emergency evacuation. Having two safe and familiar exits to the outside provides an optional means of exit in case one of the two exits is blocked. Through this policy, EEC reinforces the regulatory requirements for Family Child Care homes to have two separate, EEC-approved exits to the outside.

AUTHORITY

606 7.07(15)(b) Exits.

1. Family child care homes must have at least two separate exits to the outside, approved by the Department.
2. If the family child care home has a basement space that is approved for child care, the basement must have at least two separate means of egress directly to the outside. The two separate means of egress must be approved by the Department.

POLICY

A family child care home must have at least two separate, functioning, accessible exits to the outside.

- **Two** exits means two separate doorways leading from the home or apartment building to the outside ground level.
- **Separate** exits means the doorways are located in different parts of the home. The two exits must not be two doors in sequence along an exit route (i.e. two doors to the same exit route or passing through one door to get to another).

All exits must be:

- clearly marked with visible exit signs posted above the approved exit,
- always kept clear of obstructions, and
- easy to open from the inside of the child care space under all lighting conditions without the use of a tool or key.

Exits may be ground level doors, garage or bulkhead doors, or stairs leading from the basement to a first-floor exit.

- Doorways include front, back and side doors (including sliding glass doors) that exit via stairs or a ramp to the ground level outside.
    - Doorways to balconies above ground level that do not have stairs or a ramp to ground level are not acceptable exits.
    - Doors exiting to ladders are not acceptable exits.
- Bulkheads and garage doors may qualify as exits, provided they:
    - Can be easily opened from the inside to allow for safe evacuation of all children in a timely fashion;
    - Can be opened manually without the use of electricity; and
    - Remain unlocked at all times children are in care.
- Pursuant to 606 CMR 7.07(11), open stairways used by children younger than school age must have railings or banisters installed along the open or unprotected sides. When exiting by stairway of four or more steps, the stairway must be equipped with at least one handrail.

Elevators may not be used during an emergency evacuation. Any exit route that requires the use of an elevator will not be considered compliant with minimum exit requirements.

Evacuation routes must be kept clear of obstructions, free of hazards, snow, and ice, and must be well lit.

Exit Requirements Specific to Apartments

An apartment unit in a building complies with this policy if it has:

- A single exit from the unit to the inside of the apartment building, ***and***
- The building has two separate, distinct exits from the inside of the building to outside ground level.

Note: a converted attic apartment or basement apartment with one exit is not compliant with this policy or EEC regulations unless a certificate of occupancy includes the converted space, and a copy of that certificate of occupancy is provided to EEC.

<u>Emergency Evacuations</u>

FCC providers must have a written plan detailing procedures for meeting potential emergencies including but not limited to missing children, the evacuation of children from the home in the event of a fire, natural disaster, loss of power, heat or hot water or another emergency situation. [see 606 CMR 7.11(7)(f)]. Pursuant to that regulation:

- The plan must consider the mobility of the children and educators in the home, as well as any other household members.
- The monthly evacuation drill documentation required by 606 CMR 7.11(7)(h) must show that the provider consistently evacuates the home from all EEC-approved exits in a manner consistent with the written plan. EEC may ask the provider to demonstrate an evacuation at any time.
- Documentation of monthly drills must reflect that the provider is regularly practicing evacuations from all EEC-approved exits.

Based on the provider's ability to safely and effectively evacuate children from the home, EEC may limit the age or number of infants and non-mobile children the provider may serve.