



Family Child Care Homes in Virginia

- ✘ VA does not license child care homes until 5 unrelated children are in care.
- ✘ Most child care homes with 1-4 children are not licensed, which means no background check, no minimum health & safety training, and no inspections. (Local ordinances in Arlington, Alexandria and Fairfax County license or permit small providers).
- ✘ No requirements for safe sleeping practices, fire extinguishers, working smoking detectors, evacuation plans or lists of children care.

VA Fast Facts

- 402,000 children under age 6 have working parents
- 496,000 children between age 6 & 12 have working parents
- VA has 14 categories of license-exempt child care.

<http://va.childcareaware.org/>

Noah

Noah was rambunctious and full of life and loved to be around people. When his parents, Belle and Darin Colassaco, needed child care, they did what most parents do. They asked friends and family for recommendations.

"We didn't understand the difference licensing can make," says Belle. "We thought she only cared for a few children, she had years of experience and credentials to match, so we believed our son would be safe." Unfortunately, he was not.

In October of 2006, Noah died of accidental asphyxiation in the care of his unlicensed child care home provider in Chesterfield. His head was entrapped between a metal dog crate and the railing of a portable crib. The 32 pound metal crate had been placed on top of a plastic divider over the crib to keep him from standing up (presumably during nap time). The provider was convicted of involuntary manslaughter and sentenced to five years in prison (with four suspended).

"Nothing can bring our son back," says Belle. "But what we can do, is work to ensure that other children in child care will be safe. Never in a million years would we have ever thought that an experienced child care provider would make such a deadly mistake. We learned about the importance of licensing in a way that no family ever should."



Noah Colassaco died in an unlicensed child care home in October, 2006.

Child Care Aware of Virginia's Policy Recommendations:

- Require all paid child care providers caring for unrelated children to have a license.
- Require a comprehensive background check on all child care providers – a fingerprint check against state and federal records, a check of the sex offender registry, and a check of the child abuse registry.
- Require all child care providers to have training in child development and basic health & safety (such as first aid/CPR, safe sleeping practices, and other protections for children).
- Adopt the recommendations from the license-exempt task force to promote child safety in license-exempt care (e.g., require registration for license-exempt providers, background checks for staff, CPR certification for at least one adult on site or with the children, and safe sleeping practices for babies).

Belle Colassaco
bellecolassaco@msn.com

Child Care Aware of Virginia
Kimberly Taylor
804-285-0846
ktaylor@va.childcareaware.org