

From: Julie Price <JuliePrice@scsenate.gov>
To: Veldran, KatherineKatherineVeldran@gov.sc.gov
Date: 4/24/2014 2:15:43 PM
Subject: FW: Nana's Day Care

From: wesleydonehue@gmail.com [mailto:wesleydonehue@gmail.com] **On Behalf Of** Harvey Peeler
Sent: Wednesday, April 23, 2014 4:02 PM
To: Julie Price; Martha Casto
Subject: Fwd: Nana's Day Care

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Lara, Cynthia <Cynthia.Lara@dss.sc.gov>
Date: Wed, Apr 23, 2014 at 2:01 PM
Subject: RE: Nana's Day Care
To: Leah Miller <leahbrooksmiller@gmail.com>, glennreese <glennreese@scsenate.gov>, "Allen, Linda" <Linda.Allen@dss.sc.gov>, "Nichols, Tracey" <Tracey.Nichols@dss.sc.gov>, harvey <harvey@harveypeeler.com>
Cc: "Bolick, Leigh" <Leigh.Bolick@dss.sc.gov>

Dear Ms. Miller,

Thank you for your interest and expressed concern about the closing of Nana's Daycare. I wanted to provide you with publicly available information about Nana's Daycare so you can have a complete picture of the issues involved and a better understanding about why DSS closed Nana's Daycare in order to protect the children in their care.

In less than a 2-year period, the following occurred at this facility, operated by Sandra Slater:

- Was cited for 52 violations, including not labelling baby bottles, leaving prescription medications and toxic chemicals out in the open, having improper cribs and not having cribs for all of the infants in their care, not having staff with CPR/First Aid certification, staff/child ratio violations, having unqualified caregivers who had no proper background checks, a staff person working on-site with no proof that she was clear of Tuberculosis, practicing unsafe sleep habits for infants in their care, and other violations.
- Had difficulty finding time to meet with DSS staff to develop and discuss corrective action plans to improve the care in the facility.
- Violated the corrective action plans, established to help them get better, 6 times.
- Was assigned a Child Care Resource and Referral worker to help them with specific issues so that they could improve.
- Was repeatedly unable to provide DSS with the paperwork to be relicensed at the appropriate time, resulting in expiration of their license.
- Did not appeal the revocation of their license within the 30-day period required by law. DSS has not been provided any proof that Ms. Slater made an attempt to appeal the revocation within that time period.

Other facts:

- Ms. Slater was recently found by DSS to be operating an illegal family home out of her residence. She also was caring for 10 children. The law only allows for 6 children for those family home providers who are

legally operating. Also, Ms. Slater is allowed to care for one unrelated child without being registered by DSS.

- Tracey Nichols, the DSS worker, is an excellent worker who has done outstanding work on this case.
- The charge of Child Care Licensing in SC is to protect children. We work with providers at every opportunity to help them do the best possible job and keep their licenses, which we absolutely did with Nana's Daycare and Sandra Slater.

To help you know what some of these violations listed above mean, here are the problems that we often see resulting from providers who are not following these laws:

- Not labelling infant bottles could mean that a baby could be fed milk he is allergic to and is injured or dies.
- Not properly securing chemicals and medications could mean that a child ingests a poisonous substance or medication and is injured or dies.
- Staff without CPR and First Aid certification could mean that a child is injured and dies because no one present knew how to help in an emergency.
- Cribs that don't meet requirements could mean that a baby gets caught in a slat and dies (and children have died this way).
- Being out of staff/child ratio could mean that a child escapes a classroom, or escapes a center, and is found wandering in the road (this happens frequently).
- Not having an attendance/tracking record is so very serious, and could mean that a child is left outside alone or on a bus unattended (and children have died this way).
- Staff not having criminal or other background checks could mean that a sexual predator or drug criminal could be at the facility caring for these kids.
- Having an infant asleep on his stomach (or any unsafe sleep practice could result in a child dying. Inappropriate sleeping arrangements result in child deaths frequently).
- Having a child outside of a fire-rated infant room could mean that a fire breaks out and a child is unable to get out, as they can't get themselves out of a burning building. Having inadequate numbers of unqualified staff exacerbates this issue, because staff can only carry so many babies at a time.

Please let me know if you need any further information about why DSS had no choice but to close this center to protect the children in their care.

Sincerely,
Cynthia S. Lara, Director
Child Care Licensing, Division of Early Care and Education
SC Department of Social Services
2638 Two Notch Road, Suite 217
Columbia, SC 29204
[803-898-9024](tel:803-898-9024) (office)
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-----Original Message-----

From: Leah Miller [mailto:leahbrooksmiller@gmail.com]
Sent: Tuesday, April 22, 2014 2:24 PM
To: Lara, Cynthia; glennreese; Allen, Linda; Nichols, Tracey; harvey
Subject: Nana's Day Care

Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentleman,

It is my pleasure to write to you all today regarding my sweet son, Bennett. This past week has been really hard on our family for many reasons. Bennett's beloved Nana's was shut down by DSS for reasons which certainly don't make sense to this parent. Let me start by telling you a little bit about Bennett.

Bennett is the 4th child and baby of the family. He is three years old with older siblings who are 14, 10, and 4 and 1/2. Bennett was born at 32 weeks and spent the first month of his life in the NICU.

After Bennett was released from the NICU we noticed other problems.

It was later determined that Bennett was suffering from aspirations which eventually lead to a collapsed lung.

Bennett was admitted to the PICU and had several other hospitalizations after that. After multiple tests and doctor's visits, Bennett was diagnosed with cerebral palsy. We are very fortunate in that he has a mild form, but he's had a slew of other things to go along with. So, I'm sure you can imagine it was VERY hard to make the decision to allow Bennett to attend day care. He is the FIRST child of all four children to ever attend day care. Now, to tell you a little bit about myself; previously I worked for Family Connection of SC as the NICU parent partner and a support parent. I spent time in the NICU and made home visits to my case load. Currently, I am a public high school teacher where I teach Business Education classes. So, for the past several years I have been a mandated reporter and I find myself very critical of day care and school facilities. I'm sure you can imagine that I am much more critical on the facility in which my own child attends.

So, after much searching and deliberation we made the decision that Nana's Day Care was the best fit for our family. We didn't make this decision lightly. There were reasons we decided to go with Nana's.

First and foremost, Sandy Slater and her staff are TOP NOTCH. They really made us feel like Bennett was part of the family. There has never been any doubt in the quality of care Bennett has received, is receiving, or will receive in the future. Secondly, Nana's is super clean and well organized. I have visited many day cares where toilets are overflowing, children are unsupervised, proper food isn't being served, etc. But you'll never have to worry about finding any of that at Nana's. Quite frankly, that simply wouldn't be acceptable to Sandy and her staff. Thirdly, Nana's doesn't just care about taking care of each child. They aren't just your average babysitters. They are educators. They take their jobs very seriously and go above and beyond the call of duty to ensure they are preparing each child for a regular school classroom. Finally, Nana's is truly just like home. They have this unique ability of making the children feel as if they were at their own home. It's really a beautiful thing to watch.

Since Bennett has been attending Nana's he's really learned so many different things. Bennett has caught up with his peers in fine motor skills. He can currently recognize most letters and can recognize many sight words. He counts to 25 and can retell most stories.

Additionally, he has gained so much socially. He can follow multi-step directions, has a daily routine he can follow, plays with children and makes friends easily, obeys and listens regularly. I just can't say enough great and positive things about the wonderful education Nana's is providing for Bennett.

It really hurts my heart that one DSS caseworker who clearly failed at her job (and yes I have read the paperwork) was able to shut down a very beloved day care, but not only that it was someone's livelihood for over 25 years. My heart is truly just broken. Have you thought about what you did to the parents or the children of Nana's? Well if you haven't, let me give you a little insight. My husband and I both have full-time jobs and we didn't have anyone else to watch Bennett.

You have forced us to let my grandmother who is in her mid-70's watch Bennett each day. She's certainly not really able to do this and it is really pushing her body to the limits to care for him.

Additionally, you have really rocked Bennett's world. He was used to the consistency of day care. He loves his teachers so much and misses his friends dearly. Bennett is so upset and doesn't understand why he can't attend day care each day. Also, he is losing the precious education, interaction with other children, and consistent routine he so desperately needs. He DID NOT choose this and we DID NOT choose this as his parents. Where are you when I have a screaming child begging to see Mrs. Sandy? Or Nana? Or Kay Kay? Or his friends?

Where are you when I have to see the fatigue on my poor grandmother's face after watching him for the day?

Where are you when the parents who don't have any other options to watch their children have to take days off and lose pay? Or better yet where are you for the parents who had to lose their jobs over this?

Bottom line here is that you dropped the ball here. The system failed Nana's and there has been nothing but heartache for all involved. Did you ever find any unsanitary conditions at Nana's? No you didn't! Did you ever find a child in danger? No, you didn't! Did you ever find a child being neglected or unsupervised? No, you didn't! My suggestion to you and my prayer for you is that you acknowledge your mistake and reinstate the license of one of South Carolina's finest day cares.

Please let our children return to some normalcy and please let these people be able to return the job that was putting food on their table.

Everyone makes mistakes. Unfortunately, DSS' mistake in this case was HUGE! Right your wrong and give our babies back their precious Nana's.

Sincerely,

Leah Miller
Mother of Bennett Miller