



Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education
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Letter of Reprimand

Centers for Youth and Families – Elizabeth Mitchell Centers

Melissa Dawson, CEO
6501 W. 12th Street
Little Rock, AR 72204

June 1, 2021

Dear Ms. Melissa Dawson,

On May 28, 2021, the Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education recommended to the Child Welfare Agency Review Board that a Letter of Reprimand be issued to Centers for Youth and Families – Elizabeth Mitchell Centers based on noncompliance of the Minimum Licensing Standards. The Child Welfare Agency Review Board voted unanimously to issue this letter. The authority for the Board to grant a Letter of Reprimand is listed within the License Status Section of the Minimum Licensing Standards for Residential Facilities. It states, “The Board shall have the power to deny an application to operate a child welfare agency or to revoke or suspend a previously issued license. The Board may also issue letters of reprimand or caution to a child welfare agency.” The Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education will provide status updates to the Board regarding this matter per the Board’s request.

While Centers for Youth and Families – Elizabeth Mitchell Centers has had a long history of compliance with licensing standards, Centers has recently failed to maintain substantial compliance with the Minimum Licensing Standards in the areas of Behavior Management, Ratio & Supervision and Inspections, Investigation & Corrective Action. This lack of sustained compliance has resulted in a Corrective Action Agreement (CAA) placed on the agency. If the agency does not substantially comply with the CAA, a Probationary License may be issued by the Child Welfare Agency Review Board. A Probationary License may be issued to an agency that has not maintained compliance with Minimum Licensing Standards, but that the Board believes that compliance can be restored and subsequently maintained. This license may be issued for up to one (1) year, at the discretion of the Board. (Arkansas Code Annotated § 9-28-401, Minimum Licensing Standards for Child Welfare Agencies).

The attached CAA reflects the excessive citations and lack of sustained compliance at Centers for Youth and Families – Elizabeth Mitchell Centers. Because of this, youth are not receiving the required care as intended by the Minimum Licensing Requirements.

The Child Welfare Agency Review Board does acknowledge the efforts Centers is making to meet the CAA. Retraining staff is a huge undertaking and we understand that it does take time.



Andy Altom, Chairman of Child Welfare Agency Review Board



Date

Cc: Tonya Williams – Division Director
Ashelyn Abney – Division Assistant Director