

Cited. Now What?

Understanding Licensing Decisions and Your Next Steps

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Background Info

- Bachelors in Child and Family Development
- Masters in Business Administration, emphasis in Management
- Lead GA-Pre-K Teacher
- Health and Safety Coordinator/ Assistant Director
- FORMER Childcare Licensing Consultant (Georgia)
- Regional Manager/ Marketing Project Manager
- Strategic Partnership Manager



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Disclaimers:

I am NOT your State Licensing rep!

I am a **FORMER** licensing consultant from Georgia.

All State Licensing consultants are not the same.

Licensing requirements are different in each state, but they all have ONE common goal... Keep Children Safe! .

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Let's Talk About It
Getting cited can feel PERSONAL.

ESPECIALLY when you believe you run a good program.

But BEFORE we get **defensive**, **frustrated**—or **start drafting that email**

—we need to **UNDERSTAND** what actually happened and what our options are.

Today we're discussing strategies for evaluating and responding to licensing findings—NOT legal advice.



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Learning Objectives



Analyze

Analyze a licensing finding to identify the cited requirement, documented evidence, and basis for the licensing decision.



Determine

Determine an appropriate next step after a citation, including when to accept, seek clarification, request correction/revision, or use an available dispute/appeal process.



Develop

Develop corrective actions that address both the immediate finding and the underlying compliance gap to reduce repeat violations.

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Good Programs Get Cited Too!



Caring Staff



Quality Environment



Developmentally Appropriate Classrooms



Organized Files

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Let's Talk About It: Poll 1

You receive a citation you weren't expecting. What's your **FIRST** reaction?

- A. I need to read exactly what they cited and investigate.
- B. Call my licensing consultant's manager.
- C. There is NO WAY that's right. Walks out of the office 😡
- D. Fire everyone who was working that day!
- E. It depends on what the citation is.
- F. None of the Above



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Addressing Discrepancies



Shocked/ Confused



Angry/ Frustrated



Oblivious

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Your First Move Matters



Don't respond before you understand what you're responding to.

You don't need to immediately:

- defend yourself,
- blame an employee,
- explain why something happened,
- agree with everything,
- disagree with everything,
- or write a five-paragraph email while you're mad.

First: Understand The Finding.

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What Were you Cited For?

Requirements

- What rule, regulation, standard, or requirement was cited?

Observation/Facts

- What did licensing document happened?

Evidence

- What documentation, observation, interview, record, etc. supports the finding?

Decision

- What did the agency ultimately determine?



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Break it Apart

Citation Scenarios

- Someone agrees something happened but disagrees that it violates the cited rule.
- Or the rule applies, but the facts documented aren't accurate.
- Or the factual observation is correct, but additional information changes the context.



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What are you ACTUALLY disagreeing with?



The FACTS?
"That isn't what happened."

The REQUIREMENT?
"That rule doesn't apply to this situation."

The EVIDENCE?
"The documentation doesn't support that conclusion."

The DECISION?
"I understand what occurred, but I disagree with how the agency classified/determined it."

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Review it *BEFORE* you Respond

Start with the Finding, Not the Feeling:

A citation can be frustrating. Your response still needs to be factual.



Talk Through:

Before we decide the consultant was wrong, before we decide the teacher caused it, before we decide we're appealing anything—we need to review what was actually documented.

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Ask Questions. Get Clarity

- What rule is being cited?
- What specific observation led to the finding?
- What documentation was reviewed?
- Is there anything you don't understand about the finding?
- What happens next?



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Understanding Citations

Types of Citations:

- Minor versus Major
 - Understanding how your agency classifies findings.
- Rule violation versus area of future concern/ Technical Assistance

Reviewing Citations:

- Reviewing the findings of the inspection, at the end of the inspection.
 - If you cannot be there, have someone knowledgeable there.
- Be attentive and inquisitive. Use as a learning experience.

****REMINDER- Inspection Day is "Game Day/ Showtime"!**



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What Can Your Prove?



Records

- What documentation existed / exists at this time?



Policies and Procedures

- What was the established expectation?



People

- Who has knowledge of what occurred?



Other Evidence

- What other legitimate information supports the program?

Your response should be supported by evidence—not just disagreement.

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Does the wording accurately reflect what occurred?

Requesting a Modification:

- Issue with verbiage
 - Ex Children's files were observed to lack required documentation **versus** 1 of 8 files reviewed did not document the guardians phone number

**** Acknowledges the issue, but provides the reader with more clarity.**



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Let's Talk About It: Poll 2

Licensing cites your program for a requirement you are familiar with, but you don't understand how the rule applies to what the consultant observed. What should you do FIRST?

- Accept the citation because the consultant must be right
- Immediately dispute the citation
- Ask for clarification about how the rule applies to what was observed
- Correct the issue without asking any questions
- None of the above



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Accept? Clarify? Correct? Challenge?

 Accept The finding is supported	 Clarify You do not understand the findings or exceptions.
 Correct/ Request Revision The facts, working, documentation may warrant correction	 Challenge/ Appeal - You believe the decision is unsupported. - Refutation= A formal process

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I Didn't Know versus I Didn't Understand

I did not KNOW the Rule - I was unaware the requirement existed. - That points to a knowledge/training gap.	I did not UNDERSTAND the rule - I knew the rule existed, but misunderstood how it applied. - That points to a clarity/application gap.	I KNEW the rule, BUT... - We trained on it. - We had a policy. - Staff still didn't follow it. - That points to an implementation/accountability gap.
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Ignorance of the rules is NOT a reason to challenge

Not Every Citation Needs a Fight

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Being cited and being cited incorrectly are not the same thing.

The goal isn't to win an argument with licensing. The goal is to make sure the record accurately reflects what occurred and that your program responds appropriately.

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If the Citation is Accurate...

- FIX IT

But fixing what they found isn't enough. Now we need to figure out why it happened.



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"We don't just fix violations. We build cultures that prevent them."

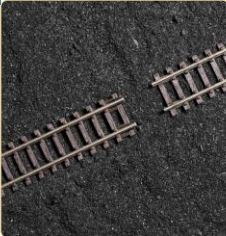
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How did this happen?

Compliance Gaps

- Communication
 - Did Staff know what was expected?
- Training
 - Were they taught how to do something correctly?
- Systems
 - Is there a process?
- Accountability
 - Who verifies that things actually happen?



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Communication versus Implementation



I Told them vs They Understand

- You may have told them.
- It may be in the handbook.
- You may have sent an email.
- You might have put it in GroupMe.

But the citation is telling us that somewhere between what leadership communicated and what actually happened, there was a gap.

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Training Complete vs Training Implemented



Staff and Leaders are NOT trained on:

- State Rules and Regulations
- Health and Safety Standards
- Company policy

**having childcare experience or a degree does not exempt someone from "training".

Ask Yourself...

- Heard it- Understood it- Practiced it- Applied it
- Did training CHANGE what happens in the classroom?
 - Evidence of implementation?

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Accountability



- Expectation- Action- Verification- Follow-Up
- Using Checklist/Documents
- Check-Ins

Systems tell us how something should happen.
Accountability verifies that it actually did.

**Delegation transfers responsibility for a task. It does not eliminate leadership accountability.

Who's checking the Checker?

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Let's Talk About It: Poll 3

Licensing observes a teacher leave the classroom briefly, causing the program to fall out of ratio. The employee has already received training on the required procedure.

What should leadership focus on FIRST when developing corrective action?

- A. Schedule the same ratio training again
- B. Determine why the trained procedure was not followed
- C. Show licensing the signed training roster
- D. Remind licensing that this was the employee's mistake



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Let's Apply It!

Scenario
Your consultant arrives at your facility and observes 3 of 5 children's files to be incomplete.

Where would you start? Where can you start to look for the gap?

Communication? Training? Systems? Accountability?



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Potential Gaps



Communication Training Systems Accountability

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Corrective Action Plan

Mistakes Happen- DO NOT BEAT YOURSELF UP

1. **IDENTIFY** — What actually went wrong?
2. **CORRECT** — What needs to happen immediately?
3. **PREVENT** — What needs to change so it doesn't happen again?
4. **ASSIGN** — Who owns each action?
5. **VERIFY** — How will leadership know the correction is working?

Share plan with EVERYONE

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Correction does NOT mean Prevention



Corrected not always mean corrected for **GOOD**

The immediate issue is fixed.

But what changed in the program?

- If licensing comes back six months from now, what is different?
- Not what did you fix that afternoon—what did you change?
- How do you ensure it doesn't happen again?

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WHEN SHORTCUTS BECOME THE STANDARD



"Just this once..."
The Shortcut



Repeated Shortcut



"This is how we do it"



A shortcut repeated long enough becomes a standard nobody intentionally created.



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Looking Beyond the Citation



One citation may reveal a bigger issue/ risk

Ask Yourself:

- Could this same issue exist elsewhere?
- Is this isolated to one employee/classroom/file?
- Does the same process affect other areas?
- When was the last time leadership verified the practice?
- What else should we review before licensing has to tell us?

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Cited. Now What?



Understand
What exactly was cited?

Review
What do the rule, facts and available evidence show?

Respond
Accept? Clarify? Correct? Challenge?

Correct
Address the immediate violation.

Diagnose
What gap allowed it to happen?

PREVENT
Change the practice/system and verify it works.

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What would you do?

Scenario

A program is cited for a supervision violation. Leadership confirms:

- Staff received supervision training.
- The program has a written supervision policy.
- The employee understood the expectation.
- Leadership discovers the same shortcut has become common during staff transitions.

What should leadership focus on NEXT?

A. Provide the same supervision training again
B. Rewrite the supervision policy
C. Examine the transition process and accountability practices
D. Explain to licensing that staff were trained



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The webinar ends. Your compliance work doesn't.



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Free practical tools to help you strengthen your systems, review
your practices, and Stay Ready.
Scan to access the FREE toolkit.





*The goal is to build a program that
recognizes problems, responds
appropriately, corrects them, and reduces
the likelihood that they happen again.*



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Questions?



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