

Warning Signs of a Dangerous Daycare

When Something Feels Wrong, It Usually Is

Most parents spend weeks researching daycares before making a decision. They tour facilities, read reviews, ask questions, and trust their instincts. But even the most careful vetting process can miss warning signs that only become visible after a child is already enrolled. Knowing what to look for, both before you commit and during the time your child attends, can be the difference between catching a problem early and dealing with the consequences of one that went unnoticed too long.

At the [Law Offices of Gary Martin Hays & Associates, P.C.](#), our Atlanta personal injury lawyers have seen how quickly situations at dangerous daycare facilities can escalate. The families who reach us after a serious injury often say the same thing: they noticed something that didn't feel right, but they weren't sure if it was serious enough to act on. This piece is for those parents. Trust your instincts, and know what to look for.

Red Flags to Watch for During a Daycare Tour

The first visit to a daycare tells you more than you might realize. Before you ever enroll your child, pay close attention to the following warning signs:

- **Staff Who Seem Disengaged or Distracted:** Caregivers should be actively interacting with and monitoring the children in their care. Staff members who are on their phones, congregating away from children, or visibly overwhelmed are a serious concern.
- **High Staff Turnover:** If the facility struggles to retain employees, that instability affects the quality of care and the consistency of supervision your child receives. Ask how long current staff members have been with the facility.
- **Dirty or Poorly Maintained Spaces:** Classrooms, bathrooms, and play areas should be clean, organized, and free from hazards. Broken equipment, unsecured furniture, or cluttered walkways are signs that maintenance is not a priority.
- **Overcrowded Classrooms:** Georgia sets specific staff-to-child ratio requirements based on age. If a room looks overcrowded or the number of children seems high relative to the number of caregivers present, ask about the facility's ratio compliance.
- **Evasive Answers to Direct Questions:** A well-run daycare welcomes parent questions about licensing, staff qualifications, inspection history, and safety protocols. Vague, defensive, or dismissive responses are a warning sign worth taking seriously.
- **No Posted License or Inspection Records:** Licensed Georgia daycare facilities are required to display their license and make inspection records available. If you can't find these documents during a tour, ask why.

Warning Signs After Your Child Is Already Enrolled

Some red flags only appear after your child has been attending for a while. Stay alert to the following signs that something may be wrong at your child's facility:

- **Unexplained Injuries:** Occasional minor scrapes are part of childhood, but bruises, cuts, or marks that the facility can't clearly account for warrant immediate follow-up.
- **Your Child Becomes Fearful or Reluctant to Go:** A child who suddenly resists going to daycare, cries more than usual at drop-off, or expresses fear about a specific person or place is communicating something important. Take it seriously.
- **Behavioral Changes at Home:** Regression to earlier behaviors like bedwetting, increased aggression, withdrawal, or persistent nightmares can be signs that something has happened in your child's environment.
- **Staff Who Are Vague About Your Child's Day:** Caregivers should be able to give you a general account of how your child spent their time. Consistently vague or evasive responses about your child's day are a red flag.
- **Frequent Staff Changes:** If your child has a new caregiver every few weeks, continuity of supervision and care is being compromised. Ask the facility directly about turnover and why it's happening.
- **Dismissive Responses to Your Concerns:** A well-run daycare takes parent concerns seriously and responds with transparency. If you raise an issue and the facility becomes defensive, minimizes what you observed, or fails to follow up, that response tells you something important about how the facility operates.

How to Check a Georgia Daycare's Compliance History

Before enrolling your child, or if concerns arise after enrollment, Georgia parents have access to tools that can reveal a facility's compliance and inspection history. Here's how to use them:

1. **Search DECAL's Online Database:** The [Department of Early Care and Learning \(DECAL\)](#) maintains records of facility inspections, licensing status, and enforcement actions. You can search for a specific facility and review its history of violations, citations, and corrective actions taken.
2. **Review Enforcement Actions:** DECAL publishes enforcement actions against licensed facilities, including fines and license restrictions. A facility with a pattern of repeat violations in areas like supervision or staff ratios deserves careful scrutiny.
3. **Ask for the Facility's Most Recent Inspection Report:** You have the right to ask the daycare directly for its most recent inspection report. A facility that refuses or delays in providing this information is not being transparent with you.

4. **Check Online Reviews With Context:** Online reviews can surface patterns of complaints that formal records don't capture. Look for recurring themes around supervision, staff behavior, or injury incidents rather than isolated negative reviews.
5. **Talk to Other Parents:** Current and former parents are often the most candid source of information about a facility's day-to-day operations. If you have concerns, ask around.

What to Do If You Spot Warning Signs

Noticing a red flag doesn't automatically mean your child has been harmed, but it does mean you owe it to your child to investigate further and act decisively if your concerns are confirmed. Here is what Georgia parents should do if something doesn't feel right:

Start by documenting what you've observed. Write down dates, times, specific incidents, and anything your child has said. Photographs of visible injuries or unsafe conditions strengthen any future complaint or legal claim.

If you believe your child's safety is at risk, remove them from the facility first and ask questions second. No notice period or enrollment contract should take priority over your child's wellbeing.

Report your concerns to DECAL by contacting their complaint intake line at (404) 657-5562 or through their website at decalfg.com. DECAL is authorized to conduct unannounced inspections and take enforcement action against facilities that violate Georgia's childcare licensing standards.

If your child has already been injured, or if you suspect abuse or neglect, [contact a Georgia daycare injury lawyer](#) as soon as possible. The sooner legal counsel is involved, the better protected your child's case will be. Evidence like surveillance footage and staff records can disappear quickly, and early legal involvement puts you in a position to preserve what matters most before it's gone.

What a Dangerous Daycare Looks Like on Paper

Sometimes the warning signs aren't visible during a tour or pickup. They live in records that most parents don't know to request. A facility that looks clean and well-staffed on the surface can have a history of DECAL citations, unresolved complaints, or prior child injuries that never made the news. Before enrolling your child in any Georgia daycare, consider requesting or researching the following:

- Current licensing status and expiration date
- History of enforcement actions or license restrictions
- Staff-to-child ratio compliance across age groups
- Records of prior injury incidents reported to DECAL

- Any history of license suspension or revocation

A facility with nothing to hide will have no problem providing this information. One that resists transparency is telling you something important with that resistance.

Georgia Families Deserve Better

Your child deserves to be safe every single day they spend at daycare. When a facility's negligence, carelessness, or outright misconduct puts that safety at risk, the Law Offices of Gary Martin Hays & Associates, P.C. is ready to stand with your family and fight for the accountability you deserve. We've been protecting Georgia families since 1993, and we know how to hold dangerous daycare facilities responsible for the harm they cause.

If your child was injured at a Georgia daycare, or if you believe they may have been mistreated, [contact us today](#) for a free consultation with a daycare negligence attorney in Georgia. We'll listen to what happened, answer your questions honestly, and help your family understand every option available. You pay nothing unless we win your case.