

The Hidden Compliance Gaps:

- Why Good Programs Still Get Cited

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Intro

Quick Bio

- Former Child Care Licensing Consultant
- Speaker
- Trainer
- Compliance Strategist



“Licensing visits are unannounced. The standards are not.”



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

Ronnae "The State Lady®" Williams

Learning Goals

01 Identify

Common hidden compliance gaps in everyday operations

02 Recognize

How communication, training, supervision & documentation affect compliance

03 Spot

Where assumptions may be creating compliance risk

04 Strengthen

Systems & accountability before gaps become licensing findings

Good Programs Get Cited Too!



Caring Staff



Quality Environment



Developmentally Appropriate Classrooms



Organized Files



Knowing the rules is only the beginning.

Compliance lives in what happens every day.

- Having a supervision policy
- Our medication policy is reviewed in orientation
- We use checklist



What is a Hidden Compliance Gap?

The space between what a program believes is happening and what is actually happening in practice.

Expectation

What should happen



Practice

What actually happens

What we think is happening vs What should be happening...

Policy/ Expectation

What we say should happen

Training

What we taught should happen

Practice

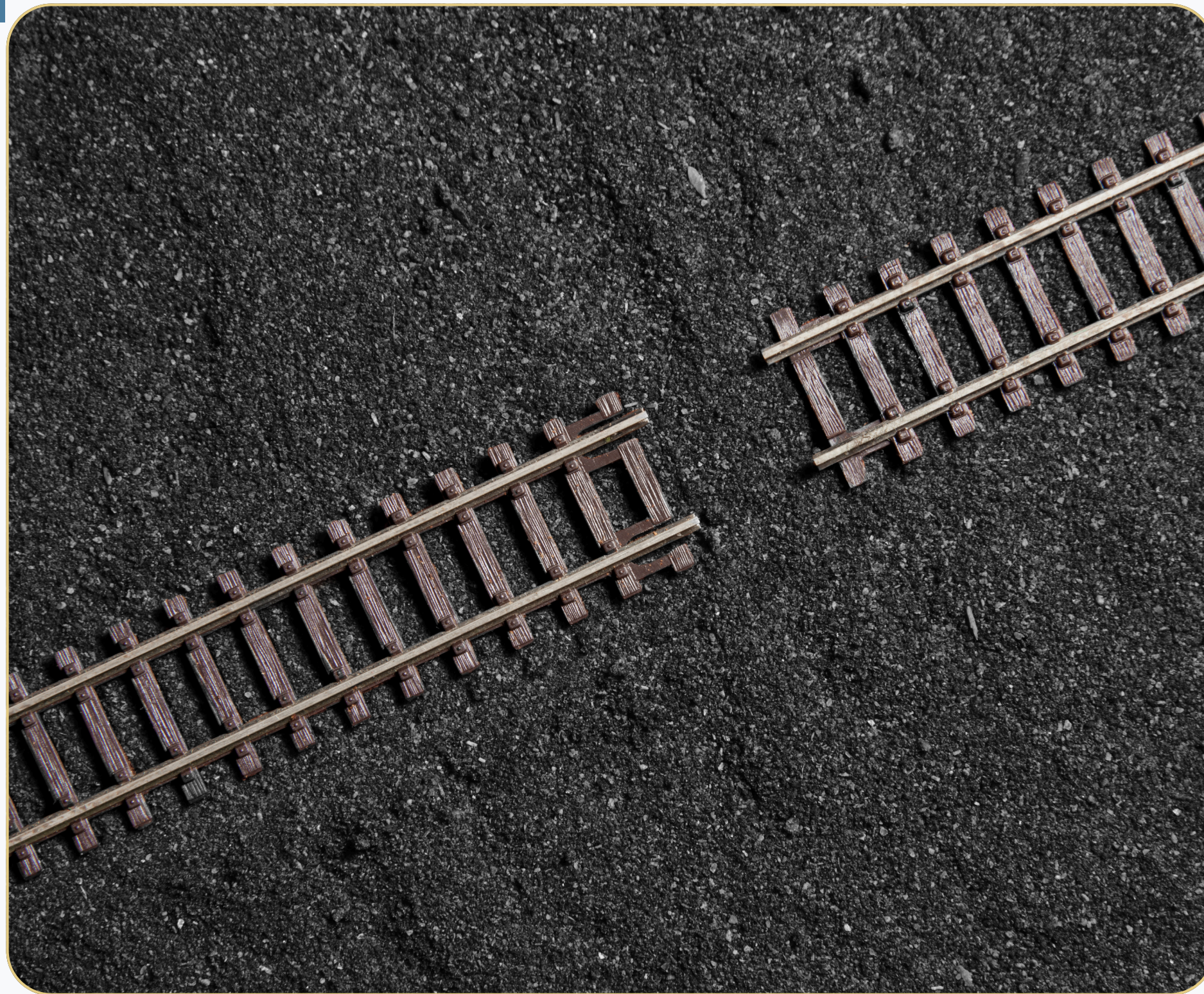
What actually happens

Documentation

What we can demonstrate happened



The space between what is expected and what is actually happening.



Where do the Gaps Hide?

- Communication
- Training
- Systems
- Accountability



Hidden Gap Check Activity

Licensing changes a rule...

- Leadership discusses the rule change during a staff meeting.
- During a classroom observation, you discover two teachers are following the old rule expectation.

Where's the gap?

- *Communication? Training? System? Accountability?*



Hidden Gap: Communication

- Communication with staff is unclear
 - Being told what to do without understanding why
 - “I told them” vs “They understand”
 - Sent as an email, inside of the handbook, in the GroupMe
 - Discussion from/ between peers during the meeting
- Messaging should be consistent with all members of management
- Communicating rule and policy changes



Hidden Gap: Training

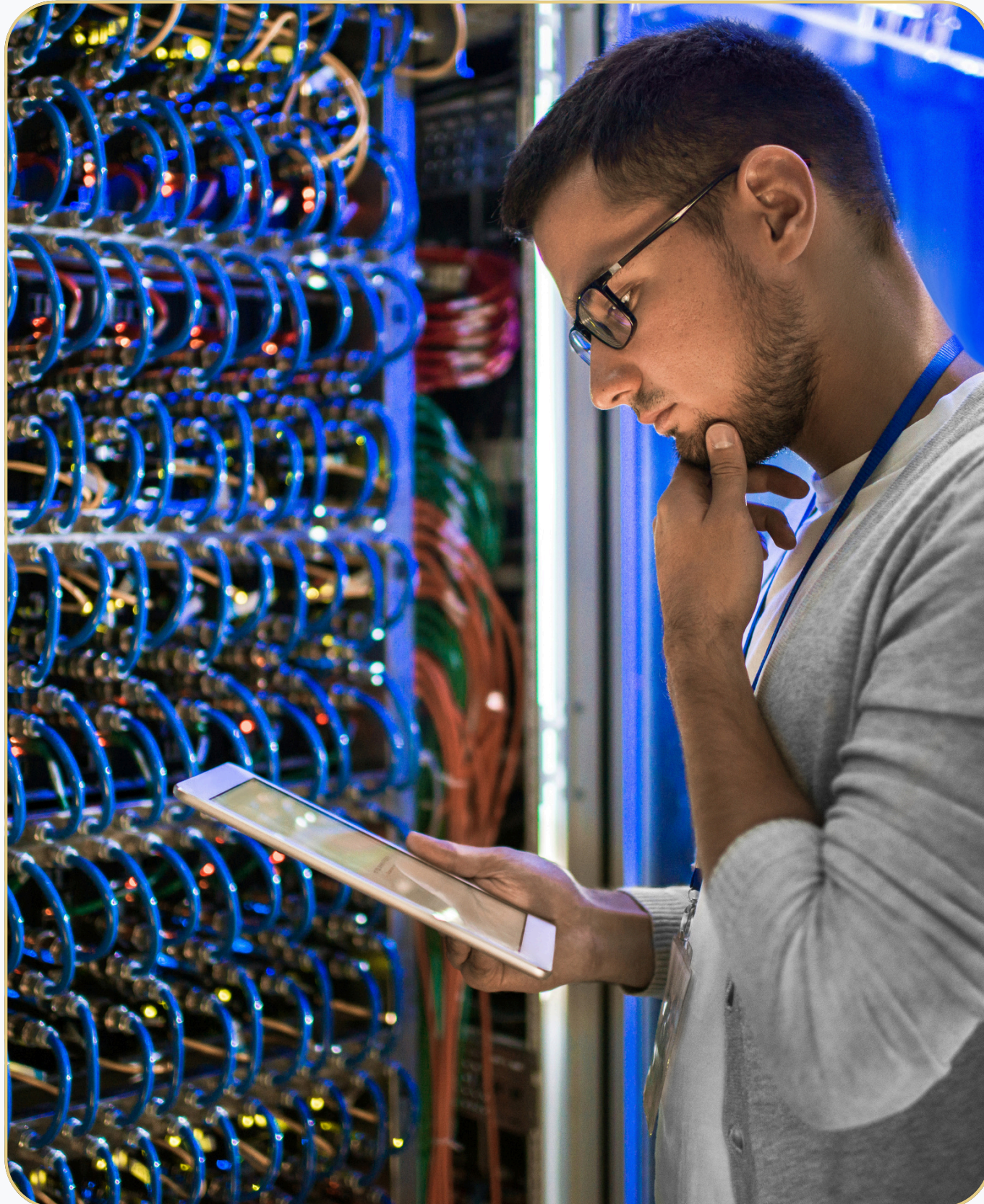
Staff and Leaders are NOT trained on:

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

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

Training completed vs Training implemented

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



Hidden Gap: Systems

Creating Systems

Establishing clear policies and procedures that align with values and state rules and regulations

Create Realistic Plans

Create plans that can be implemented with current resources.

Ensure Plans are accurate

****Processes for Everything**

Review for Changes

Enrollment/ Disenrollment

New Hires

Opening/ closing procedures

Paperwork- playground, medication, documentation

If the system only works with your strongest employee is there, it is not a strong system.

Hidden Gap: 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?





Don't just fix the finding

Find the gap that caused it.



Hidden Gap Check Activity

Licensing changes a rule...

- Leadership discusses the rule change during a staff meeting.
- During a classroom observation, you discover two teachers are following the old rule expectation.
- **Where's the gap?**
 - Was everyone at the meeting?
 - Was understanding verified?
 - Was the written procedure updated?
 - Was the change practiced?
 - Did leadership follow up?
 - Was implementation checked?

Knowing the Rules Isn't Enough

They Don't Know

- Copy what others do
- Do what they think they're supposed to do
- Standards vary from staff to staff.
- No visual reminders of what rules are
- No accountability

They Do Know

- Staff are "knowledgeable" but without context.
- Rules are ignored/inconsistent when busy/ short staffed.
- Staff lack accountability

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.



Closing the Gap

Set It

Make Expectations Clear

Systemize it

Build the expectation into everyday operations.

Support It

Train, communicate, coach, and reinforce.

Check It

Verify that practice matches expectation.



Set It



Make Expectations Clear

Establishing policies and procedures that align with values and state rules and regulations

Ensure all staff are aware of and understand expectations, including state rules, policies and procedures, and employee expectations.



Things to Consider

Could your staff explain the expectation without you in the room?



Systemize It



Build Compliance into the way work gets done

- Define the processes
- Account for obstacles
- Identify roles and responsibilities
- Ensure the system is practical and sustainable



Things to Consider

If the system only works when your strongest employee is there, it is not a strong system.



Support It

Communicate

- Use consistent language across leadership
- Explain the why, not just the rule
- Communicate changes clearly and consistently

Train

- Train for understanding, not attendance
- Demonstrate what correct practice looks like
- Allow questions and clarification

Coach

- Revisit expectations regularly
- Follow up after training or correction
- Recognize when it's being done correctly

Reinforce

- Correct issues in real time
- Be specific about what needs to change
- Show what “right” looks like

Don't just tell them. Help them do it correctly.



Check It



Who's Checking the Checker?

Observe

See what's really happening

Verify

Does practice match expectation?

Document

Can it be demonstrated?

Follow Up

Are corrections sticking?

Alignment Check...

Where is the gap?

1. Policy $\neq$ Practice

Your binder says one thing.
Your building does another.
That's the gap.

2. Training $\neq$ Doing

Staff were trained.
But are they applying it daily?
Knowing isn't the same as doing.

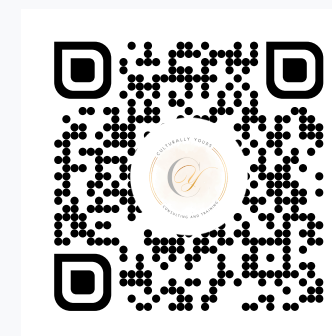
3. Doing $\neq$ Documenting

You're doing great work.
But if it's not written down, it didn't happen.
Inspectors need evidence.

4. Fixing $\neq$ Sustaining

You corrected the issue once.
But did it stick?
Systems prevent repeat citations.

Put into Practice / Inspection Readiness Toolkit



Assumption Trap



“We have a policy.” ≠ They follow it.



“We trained on that.” ≠ They understood it.



“My director handles that.” ≠ It was verified.



“We have a checklist.” ≠ It is being used correctly.

Assumption is where hidden gaps survive.



Look Through Fresh Eyes

- What has become “normal” that shouldn’t be?
- What have we stopped noticing?
- What are we assuming is happening because it always has?

One of the hardest things about evaluating your own program is that you see it every day. Eventually, things become part of the scenery.”



What will you verify?

Think about your program.
What is ONE thing you currently assume is happening...
that you need to verify?

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Licensing visits are unannounced,
the standards are not.



Stay Ready so you don't have to
Get Ready.



Thank You

Questions

Connected & Get the Toolkit

