

Your Child's Safety in Licensed Child Care Centers



Why is it important to license child care?

Parents who use child care entrust their children to a care provider for many hours each day. Licensing child care helps protect the health and safety of children by requiring that providers meet minimum standards for care and physical environment.

How do child care centers differ from other child care?

In Minnesota, licensed child care is provided through either family child care or child care centers. Family child care is generally provided in the caregiver's home and no more than 14 children can be cared for at any one time. A child care center, generally, is characterized by a location other than the provider's or caregiver's residence, larger numbers of children being cared for, and staff qualification and training requirements.

Staff ratios and group sizes

The center must meet the minimum adult/child ratios and maximum group size with the following age categories:

Age category	Adult/child ratio	Max. group size
Infant	1:4	8
Toddler	1:7	14
Preschool	1:10	20
School Age	1:15	30

Staff qualifications

A child care center must have the appropriate number of staff qualified as teachers, assistant teachers and aides based on the number of children in each age group.

Teacher: A child care center teacher must be at least 18 years old and meet one of nine possible combined credential, educational, and experience requirements; for example, a high school diploma with 4,160 hours experience as an assistant teacher and 24 credit hours in a child care related area of study.

Assistant teacher: An assistant teacher must work under the supervision of a teacher, must be at least 18 years old, and meet one of nine possible combined credential, educational and experience requirements; for example, a high school diploma with 2080 hours of experience as an aide or intern and 12 quarter credits in a child care related area of study.

Aide: An aide carries out the child care program activities under the supervision of a teacher or assistant teacher. An aide must be at least 16; if under 18, the aide must be directly supervised by a teacher or assistant teacher at all times except when assisting with sleeping children or with toileting and diapering.

Volunteers: If included in the adult/child ratio, volunteers must meet the requirements for the assigned staff positions. The director, teacher, or assistant teacher must supervise volunteers who have direct contact or access to children.

Background studies

To protect children's safety, controlling individuals, staff and other specified individuals having direct contact with children in care must have a background study conducted by the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS). A background study is a screening to determine whether something occurred in a person's history that would cause them to be disqualified to work in a licensed child care center.

Staff orientation and in-service training

A child care center must ensure that all staff and volunteers who have direct contact with children participate in orientation training before starting work. At least one staff person trained in CPR and first aid must be present in the center at all times when children are in care. Teachers and assistant teachers are required to be trained in CPR and first aid. The center must ensure that all staff complete annual in-service training consistent with the staff person's position and annual hours worked at the program.

Child care program plan

The center must develop a written child care program plan that addresses the following:

- Supervision
- Age categories and number of children served
- Days and hours of operation
- Goals and objectives
- Specific activities
- Documentation of each child's progress
- Daily schedule.

When a child with special needs joins a child care center, the center must develop an individual plan for that child.

Policies

Child care centers must develop and implement written policies governing behavior guidance, information for parents, emergency and health policies.

Behavior guidance: A child care center must have guidelines on how caregivers should give each child guidance which helps him or her acquire a positive self-image and learn self-control and acceptable behavior. The guidelines should address how caregivers manage unacceptable behavior and what actions, such as corporal punishment, are prohibited.

Information for parents: When a center enrolls a child, it must give parents written notification of:

- Ages and numbers of children in care
- Hours of operation
- Educational methods
- Political, religious, behavioral and philosophical ideology
- Parents' rights
- Parents' conferences
- Health care summary
- Sick care policies, first aid
- Medication administration
- Parental permission policy
- Pet policy
- Visiting procedures
- Grievance procedures.

Emergency and accident policies and records:

A child care center must keep a record of emergencies, accidents and injuries that occur. Policies must address first aid and safety rules, daily inspections for hazards, fire prevention, disaster procedures, missing child procedures, unauthorized pick-up of a child, medical emergency, recording procedures and annual analysis of center policies.

Health policies: A child care center must have approved health policies and have a health consultant who annually reviews the center's health policies, including first aid, safety, diapering and sanitation policies. The center must follow rules for ensuring children are immunized, notifying parents about sick children, administering medicine to children, and following sanitation practices concerning toilet facilities, diaper changing and hand washing.

Records

Administrative records must include parent information, personnel records, children's records, a child care program plan, emergency and accident records, a risk reduction plan, staff distribution schedule, separation reports and health consultant reports.

- **Personnel records** must include the staff person's identifying information; documentation that the staff person meets the job requirements, including education and experience; and documentation of



participation in orientation, first aid and CPR training, and in-service training.

- **Children's records** must include identifying information, parents' names, addresses, and phone numbers, parental contact information, a list of people authorized to pick up the child, medical care information, emergency care information, immunization records, hours of attendance, dietary needs, individual child care program and parent conferences documentation.

Facility requirements

Building code: A center must comply with applicable building codes.

Fire code: A center must be inspected by a fire marshal within the 12 months before initial licensure.

Floor plan and designated areas: Indoor and outdoor space to be used for child care must be designated on the facility floor plan.

Outdoor activity area: Outdoor space must be at least 1,500 square feet total and at least 75 square feet per child; be within 2000 feet of the center; be enclosed if adjacent to traffic and other hazards; be free of litter and other hazards; and have the required outdoor large muscle equipment.

Indoor space: The licensed capacity is limited by the amount of indoor space. A minimum of 35 square feet is required for each child.

Toilets and sinks: A child care center must have one sink and one toilet for each 15 children and proper toilet training equipment for toddlers. Hand sinks, other than for infants, must be in the toilet areas. Single service towels or air dryers must be in each restroom. Fixtures must be placed at age-appropriate heights. Water temperatures must not exceed 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

Furnishings, equipment, materials and supplies:

A child care center must have the quantity and type of furnishings, equipment and materials specified for infants, toddlers, preschoolers and school-age children. Examples include:

- Furnishings — rugs or carpets, nonfolding chairs, cribs and changing tables

- Program equipment and materials — books, large and small building blocks, infant mobility equipment, cognitive development material, manipulative equipment and arts and crafts supplies
- Supplies — blankets and sheets, disposable changing table paper, diapers, single service towels and liquid handsoap.

How to apply for a license

To apply for a Minnesota child care center license:

- Submit a completed license application form and required policy and procedure documents and forms to DHS. The application form can be found in the licensing forms area on the Department of Human Services website.
- Document compliance with the applicable building, fire and safety codes, health rules, zoning ordinances, or document that an appropriate waiver has been given.
- Provide evidence of workers' compensation insurance coverage.
- Provide Social Security and Minnesota business identification numbers as well as ownership verification.
- Submit a nonrefundable license fee (the amount will depend on the licensed capacity of the facility) to the Licensing Division.

A license application is not considered complete until all of the required documentation is submitted. When the department has approved a completed application, a child care licenser will schedule and conduct an on-site licensing inspection to ensure the basic standards are met.

For more information

A complete description of child care center licensing requirements can be found in [Minnesota Rules, parts 9503.0005 to 9503.0170, commonly called Rule 3, Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 245A \(Human Services Licensing Act\), Chapters 245C \(Human Services Background Studies Act\), and 626.556 \(Maltreatment of Minors Act\).](#) Also, you may contact the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Licensing Division, PO Box 64242, St. Paul, MN 55164-0242 or call 651-431-6500.



651-431-6500

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