

# Your Guide to Licensed Child Care

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Your summary of the child care rules



## TYPES OF LICENSED CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

### Family child care centers

A program regulated under DCF 250 where a person provides care and supervision for less than 24 hours per day for at least 4 and not more than 8 children who are not related to the provider.

Age groups may be mixed according to the following combinations. Additional allowed school-aged children in care for 3 or fewer hours per day are shown in parentheses.

Children Under Age 2		Children Age 2 and Older		School Age Children	Maximum Group Size
0	+	8	+	(0)	8
1	+	7	+	(0)	8
2	+	5	+	(1)	8
3	+	2	+	(3)	8
4	+	0	+	(2)	6

### Group child care centers

A program regulated under DCF 251 where a person for less than 24 hours per day provides care and supervision for 9 or more children who are not related to the provider.

Age of Children	Staff-To-Child Ratio*	Maximum Group Size
Birth to 2 yrs	1:4 or .25	8
2 yrs to 2½ yrs	1:6 or .167	12
2½ yrs to 3 yrs	1:8 or .125	16
3 yrs	1:10 or .10	20
4 yrs	1:13 or .077	24
5 yrs	1:17 or .059	34
6 yrs and over	1:18 or .056	36

\* These ratios are adjusted for mixed age groups

### Day camps for children

A program regulated under DCF 252 that provides care and supervision to 4 or more children, 3 years of age and older, in a seasonal program oriented to the out-of-doors for periods less than 24 hours per day.

## A WORD ON WISCONSIN CHILD CARE REGULATIONS

Anyone providing care and supervision for 4 or more children under age 7 years for less than 24 hours a day must be licensed by the Department. Exceptions to this rule are:

- A parent, grandparent, greatgrandparent, stepparent, brother, sister, first cousin, nephew, niece, uncle, or aunt of a child, whether by blood, marriage, or legal adoption, who provides care and supervision for the child.
- Public and parochial schools.
- Care provided in the home of the child's parent for less than 24 hours per day.
- Counties, cities, towns, school districts and libraries that provide programs for children primarily intended for social or recreational purposes.
- A program that operates not more than 4 hours per week.
- Group lessons to develop a talent or skill such as dance or music, social group meetings and activities, group athletics.
- A program where the parents are on the premises and are engaged in shopping, recreation or other non-work activities.
- Seasonal programs of ten days or less duration in any 3-month period, including day camps, vacation bible school and holiday child care programs.
- Emergency situations.
- Care and supervision for no more than 3 hours a day while the parent is employed on the premises.
- A program provided where the child of a recipient of temporary assistance to needy families, or Wisconsin works, is involved in orientation, enrollment or initial assessment or where parents are provided training or counseling.

Regulations set standards for adequate child care, but they cannot guarantee quality care. That is why parent involvement is so crucial.



Division of Early Care and Education  
Bureau of Early Care Regulation

DCF-P-2436 (03/09)

<http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/>

## WHAT IS QUALITY CHILD CARE?

That question has no easy, quick answer. Evaluating child care may seem an overwhelming task, especially if you are new to child care services. This checklist can help. For a thorough evaluation, go through the entire checklist section by section, or, if you prefer, focus on the parts that seem most important to you.

### Caregivers

- Do they genuinely seem to enjoy working with young children?
- Do they seem to be warm, loving people?
- Do they talk with you openly and straightforwardly about their policies?
- What training and experience do they have? Do they receive regular, ongoing job-related training?
- Do they seem to get along well with each other?

### Caregiver / Child Interaction

- Do they get down to the child's eye level when talking to or listening to the children?
- Do they encourage the children to express their feelings verbally?
- Do they encourage children to work out negative feelings without hurting others?
- Do they respect individual differences among the children?
- Do the child guidance measures focus on what the child should do rather than what the child should not do?
- Do they set reasonable limits and allow children to make choices when appropriate?
- Do they provide guidance with words, tone of voice and actions that show respect for children? Note: See licensing rules for prohibited punishments.
- Do they show patience by letting children do things for themselves and exert their independence?
- Do the children seem comfortable when talking to the caregivers?
- Do the children seem happily occupied and relaxed?
- Does the ratio of children to caregivers meet state requirements (see next page)?

## PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- Are the play areas clean and large enough so children can move freely and safely?
- Is the playground safe and supervised by an adult?
- Is play equipment sturdy and in good repair?
- Are games, toys, etc. stored where the children can get to them?
- Are wall displays placed at child's eye level?
- Are unused electrical sockets covered with safety caps?
- Are cleaning fluids, medications, poisons, sharp tools, matches, etc. stored away from children?
- Is the area free of other hazards: peeling paint, exposed electrical wires, uncovered hot water pipes, unprotected hot radiators or heaters?
- Are fire safety and tornado drills practiced?
- Are emergency telephone numbers posted by the telephones?
- Is there adequate heat, ventilation and lighting?
- Are bathrooms clean and sanitary?
- Are footstools in the bathrooms to help young children reach toilets and sinks?

## PROGRAM / ACTIVITIES

- Is there a regular daily schedule? Is it organized without being rigid?
- Are activities geared for different age and developmental levels?
- Are there indoor and outdoor activities?
- Is time provided for physical activity and quiet play?
- Is there a nap or rest period?
- Are there structured activities as well as free play when children can choose what to do?
- Are there opportunities for different types of interactions—large group play, small group play, alone time?
- Are there materials for different types of play—drama, music, creative movement, language skills, gross and fine motor skills, art projects, sand and water play?

## PROGRAM / ACTIVITIES (continued)

- Are there living plants for children to observe and care for?
- Are there pets in areas of the center accessible to children? Have pets been appropriately vaccinated? Are pets tolerant of children? Is close supervision provided?
- Are the children taken out into the community for activities—parks, libraries, museums, field trips? Is there adequate supervision?

## TRANSPORTATION

- Does the center's policy address insurance coverage for transportation?
- Are vehicles in safe operating condition?
- Are appropriate individual child car safety seats and booster seats used?
- Does the center have a procedure to ensure that no child is left unattended in a vehicle?

## GENERAL THINGS TO LOOK FOR

- Is the license certificate posted?
- Are visits by the parents, whether announced or unannounced, welcome at any time?
- Are there opportunities for parent / caregiver communication?
- Is this the kind of place you would enjoy spending your day?
- Are the results of the most recent licensing visit posted?
- Do staff and children wash their hands before meals and after toileting or diapering?
- Are meals and snacks well balanced and wholesome?
- Is the food preparation area clean and sanitary?
- Are menus posted?

## IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS

First, talk to your child's caregiver and try to work out your differences. If those attempts fail, and you feel the caregiver is violating a state licensing regulation, contact the appropriate regional office.

### REGIONAL OFFICES

#### Northeastern Regional Office

200 N. Jefferson, Ste. 411

Green Bay, WI 54301

Gen: (920) 448-5312

[plicbrlnro@dhsf.state.wi.us](mailto:plicbrlnro@dhsf.state.wi.us)

Brown, Calumet, Door, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Marquette, Menominee, Oconto, Outagamie, Ozaukee, Shawano, Sheboygan, Waupaca, Waushara, Winnebago, Washington

#### Northern Regional Office

2187 N. Stevens St., Ste. C

Rhineland, WI 54501

Gen: (715) 365-2500

[plicbrlnro@dhsf.state.wi.us](mailto:plicbrlnro@dhsf.state.wi.us)

Ashland, Bayfield, Florence, Forest, Iron, Langlade, Lincoln, Marathon, Oneida, Portage, Price, Sawyer, Taylor, Vilas, Wood

#### Southeastern Regional Office

141 NW Barstow, Rm. 104

Waukesha, WI 53188-3789

Gen: (262) 521-5100

[plicbrlsero@dhsf.state.wi.us](mailto:plicbrlsero@dhsf.state.wi.us)

Kenosha, Milwaukee, Racine, Waukesha

#### Southern Regional Office

P.O. Box 8947

Madison, WI 53708-8947

Gen: (608) 266-2900

[plicbrlsro@dhsf.state.wi.us](mailto:plicbrlsro@dhsf.state.wi.us)

Adams, Columbia, Crawford, Dane, Dodge, Grant, Green, Iowa, Jefferson, Juneau, LaFayette, Richland, Rock, Sauk, Walworth

#### Western Regional Office

610 Gibson St., Ste. 2

Eau Claire, WI 54701-3696

Gen: (715) 836-2185

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Barron, Buffalo, Burnett, Chippewa, Clark, Douglas, Dunn, Eau Claire, Jackson, La Crosse, Monroe, Pepin, Pierce, Polk, Rusk, St. Croix, Trempealeau, Vernon, Washburn