

## Does Washington State set the payment rates and other business policies for child care and school age care programs?

No. Policies regarding fees, deposits, vacations, closed days, hours of operation, whether or not meals are served, etc. are not set by licensing standards, but must be explained in writing and communicated to parents. To help avoid misunderstandings, always ask for a written copy of the provider's policies.

The state does set the reimbursement rate for Working Connections Child Care – the state program that helps low-income families pay for child care. Many licensed child care programs accept this subsidy and parents generally pay a portion of the child care cost.

## How does the state monitor child care and school age care programs?

- ❖ State licensors inspect programs when granting a license. Care must be provided in the location listed on the license.
- ❖ Licensors attempt to monitor family child care homes every 18 months and child care centers once per year.
- ❖ Licensors conduct full inspections every three years when licenses are due for renewal.
- ❖ Licensors investigate all complaints and make visits to gather information when a complaint is filed.
- ❖ Licensors check for reports of child abuse and neglect on every applicant and renewal.

## What if I have concerns about a licensed child care or school age care program?

You can play an important role in the ongoing monitoring of licensed child care and school age care programs. To inquire about a specific licensed program, discuss concerns or file a complaint, visit the Department of Early Learning Child Care Check web page at <https://apps.del.wa.gov/check/CheckSearch.aspx>

## Where can I find out more about licensed child care in Washington State?

Your local Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network member program can help you with any child care question including licensing issues. To reach your local resource and referral program, call the Washington State Child Care Resource & Referral Network at 1-800-446-1114 and you will be connected with the agency serving your community. You can also find the Network online at [www.childcarenet.org](http://www.childcarenet.org).

You can obtain more information about licensing requirements in the detailed Washington Administrative Codes (WAC) at:

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/wac/>  
or by visiting  
<http://www.del.wa.gov/>



# Licensed Child Care in Washington State



## A Guide for Families





### What is the purpose of Washington State’s child care licensing system?

Washington State has a licensing system to set basic standards of safety and quality in child care programs – including school age care programs. The state issues licenses through the Department of Early Learning (DEL).

### Do all child care programs require licenses?

Washington State’s child care licensing system applies to:

- ❖ Family child care homes – people in their own homes looking after children (0-12 years old) to whom they are not related
- ❖ Child care centers – programs for 12 or more children (0-11 years old), usually grouped by age

Some types of care are not regulated by the state. These include part-day preschool programs, nanny and babysitting services in the child’s home, care provided by relatives, community recreation programs, informal parent cooperatives and playgroups.

### What are the basic requirements for licensing in Washington State?

- ❖ In order to become licensed, child care programs must be inspected by a state licensor and meet minimum requirements in the following areas:
- ❖ Health and safety
- ❖ Fire safety
- ❖ Criminal history clearance for all staff through the Washington State Patrol or the FBI (if the person has lived in Washington for 3 years or less)
- ❖ Infant/child first-aid, CPR and HIV/AIDS training
- ❖ Training in child care and early learning for staff (20 hour initial training, 10 hours annually for lead staff )
- ❖ Indoor and outdoor environment and play materials
- ❖ Total capacity and the number of children allowed per adult
- ❖ Use of positive discipline
- ❖ Planned, age-appropriate activities
- ❖ Written business policies including information about fees, hours, etc.
- ❖ Communication with families and a posted daily schedule

### What kinds of activities must a licensed child care or school age program provide?

While licensing regulations require a child care program to have some planned activities, programs vary widely. It is up to you to decide whether a particular program meets your expectations in terms of overall quality and design, staff-child interactions, types of activities (including the number of television, computer and video hours), staff experience and credentials, atmosphere, consistency with family or cultural values, physical layout, etc.

Feel free to ask a provider about their accreditation, education and turnover, family involvement, group size and ratio and health and safety standards.

### How many children can a program care for?

Washington State limits the number of children that can be cared for in any particular licensed child care situation. Regulations for child care centers and family child care homes differ as indicated in the charts below. Ask to see the license and verify the maximum number of children the provider is licensed to care for at one time. The provider’s own children of child care age also count toward the maximum. Remember, these are the “minimum licensing requirements,” and some programs will have more caregivers than required. Providers may also choose to accept fewer children than allowed.

Child Care Centers		
Age of Children	Staff/Child Ratio	Group Size*
1 to 11 months (Infant)	1 to 4	8
12 to 29 Months (Toddler)	1 to 7	14
30 Months to 5 years (Preschool)	1 to 10	20
5 years and older (School-age)	1 to 15	30

\* Maximum number of that age in one room at any time.

Family Child Care Homes			
Requirement	Age Range	Total Under Age 2	Group Size
Provider	0 to 11 yrs	2	6
Provider w/ 1 yr experience	2 to 11 yrs	N/A	8
Provider w/ 1 yr experience	5 to 11 yrs	N/A	10
Provider w/1 yr experience & assistant	0 to 11 yrs	4	9
Provider w/2 yrs experience & 1 ECE class	3 to 11 yrs	N/A	10
Provider w/2 yrs experience & 1 ECE class & assistant	0 to 11 yrs	4	12

\* Maximum number of children in the family care home at any one time including the provider’s own children 12 & under.