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 the 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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age category</th>
<th>Adult/child ratio</th>
<th>Max. group size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infant</td>
<td>1:4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toddler</td>
<td>1:7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>1:10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Age</td>
<td>1:15</td>
<td>30</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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 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 quarter credits 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 2,080 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 years old; if under 18 years old, 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 and all people directly employed by the center, even if they do not provide direct contact services, must have a cleared background study conducted by the Minnesota Department of Human Services. There are other conditions where a volunteer or contractor may require a cleared background study. 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 or volunteer in a licensed child care center.

Training requirements
Child care centers must ensure that the director, staff persons, substitutes and unsupervised volunteers participate in orientation training on health and safety topics before starting work. All of these individuals must also complete pediatric first aid and pediatric CPR training within 90 days of employment and before having unsupervised direct contact with a child. This training must be repeated every other year.

Child development and learning training is required every other year. Depending on the age of the children served, sudden unexpected infant death and abusive head trauma prevention training are also required.

Training on the proper use and installation of child passenger restraint systems must be completed by everyone who places a child under age 8 into a passenger restraint. Every calendar year, the director, staff persons, substitutes and unsupervised volunteers must complete in-service training hours.

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 behavior guidance policies, information for parents, emergency policies, health policies and a risk reduction plan to minimize risks to children.

Behavior guidance: A child care center must have guidelines on how caregivers should give each child guidance, which helps the child 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
- Behavior guidance policy
- Meals and snacks policy
- Emergency plan.
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.

Risk reduction plan: A child care center must have a plan that identifies general risks to children served by the center, establish procedures to minimize the identified risks, train staff on the procedures and annually review the procedures.

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 completion of required trainings.

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 needs 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.

Outdoor activity area: Outdoor space must be at least 1,500 total square feet and at least 75 square feet per child; be within 2,000 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, materials and supplies specified for infants, toddlers, preschoolers and school-age children. Examples include:

- Furnishings: rugs or carpets, non-folding chairs, cribs and changing tables
- 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 hand soap.
For more information
A complete description of child care center licensing requirements can be found in:

- Minnesota Rules, parts 9503.0005-9503.0170
- Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 245A
- Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 245C
- Minnesota Statutes, 626.556.

You may contact the DHS Licensing Division at 651-431-6500.

651-431-6500

Attention. If you need free help interpreting this document, call the above number.

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