



children's home + aid
Child Care Resource + Referral Program



Knowing the Rules

A Summary of Licensing Standards for Child Care in Illinois
+ A Guide to Selecting Quality Child Care

Resource Directory

Children's Home + Aid, Child Care Resource + Referral Program

www.ChildrensHomeAndAid.org/ccrsouthern 1-800-467-9200

To learn more about child care in your community and for child care referrals, call 1-800-467-9200, ext. 390, or fill out an online referral form online. To inquire about eligibility or an application for the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) child care assistance program, call 1-800-847-6770, ext. 360 or download an application online.

DCFS Day Care Licensing Unit (Belleville, IL)

www.state.il.us/dcfs 1-618-257-7500

Call with questions, concerns or complaints about a licensed child care program's compliance with the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) licensing standards and to view all day care licensing requirements

Day Care Information

<http://sunshine.dcfs.illinois.gov/content/licenseddaycarecompliance/search.aspx> 1-877-746-0829

To inquire about a child care program's licensing status or substantiated complaints.

All Kids

www.allkids.com 1-866-ALL-KIDS (1-866-255-5437)

To inquire about qualifying for health insurance for Illinois children.

Illinois 24-hour Child Abuse Hotline

www.state.il.us/dcfs 1-800-252-2873

Call if you suspect or know of an incident of child abuse or neglect.

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

www.childrenshomeandaid.org 1-618-874-0216 ext.304

Provides services and resources to grandparents including referral assistance, respite care, gap-filling funds, and support groups.

ExceleRate Illinois

www.excelebrateillinois.com 1-866-697-8278

Child + Family Connections

www.childandfamilyconnections.org 1-800-594-8364

Provides services to families with children birth to age 3. Obtains evaluations and assessments for children with disabilities or at-risk conditions.

Illinois State Board of Education

www.isbe.net/earlychi 1-866-262-6663

To learn more about Preschool for All, Early Childhood Special Education Services and Parents Rights.

StarNet Region IV

roe.stclair.k12.il.us/starnet 1-800-942-7827

1000 S. Illinois St. Belleville, IL 62220

United Way 211

www.211missouri.org 2-1-1 or 800-427-4626

Connects people with available community resources and volunteer opportunities.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Child Care Program - a facility that cares for more than three children in a setting that is not a family home. Child care centers, nursery schools, preschools, and school age programs are included in the definition.

Family Child Care Home - the care of up to 8 children (or up to 12 children with a full-time assistant) in a family home including the child care provider's own children, related and unrelated, under age 13.

Group Child Care Home - the care of up to 12 children (or up to 16 children with an assistant) in a family home including the child care provider's own children, related and unrelated, under age 13.

License-Exempt Child Care - care that does not require a license from Illinois DCFS to operate. Facilities or programs exempt from licensing include:

- Care provided in the child's own home with three or fewer children present including the child care provider's own children under the age of 13, or one sibling group.
- Family child care for up to three children, including the child care provider's own children under the age of 13, or the children of one other family.
- Programs serving children age 3 years and older which are operated by public or private elementary schools, or schools which are registered with the Illinois State Board of Education or accredited by a national organization that regularly recognizes or accredits schools.
- Part day programs operated by a religious organization or social service agency in which no child is cared for more than ten hours in a seven day week.
- Programs conducted on federal government premises.
- Special activities programs operating on a short term basis.
- Programs providing care for transient children while the parents are on the premises.

Partially Exempt Program - the physical facility is exempt from Department regulations; however, the Department regulates the personnel and operating programs. This is a child care program operated by a private entity on the grounds of a public or private elementary or secondary school where children have been attending school during the day.

Child Care Programs

Group Size and Ratio: The maximum number of children grouped according to ages and the minimum staff required:

Age	Maximum Group Size	Child/Staff Ratio
6 weeks - 14 months	12	4 : 1
15 months - 2 years	15	5 : 1
2 years - 3 years	16	8 : 1
3 years - 4 years	20	10 : 1
5 years - kindergarten	20	20 : 1
6 years and older	30	20 : 1

Mixed Age Groupings		
6 weeks - 24 months	12	4 : 1
2 years - 5 years	16	8 : 1
3 years - 5 years	20	10 : 1
6 years and older	30	20 : 1

With the exception of the first and last hour of operation, infants and toddlers cannot be grouped with children older than 24 months. School-age children must be grouped with children five years of age or older. Five year old children can be grouped with either preschoolers or school-age children.

Staff Requirements: All staff generally must have the skill and competence needed to contribute to the children’s physical, intellectual, personal, emotional and social development. Each staff member must have a minimum of 15 hours of in-service training each year and must be on the Illinois Gateways to Opportunity Registry.

All staff 18 years and older must have a current medical report with a tuberculosis skin test, and are subject to a Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System (CANTS) check, a Law Enforcement Agency Data System (LEADS) check, fingerprinting for a criminal history check and a check of the Statewide Child Sex Offender Registry, and have three references on file. A staff member trained in CPR, the Heimlich Maneuver, and First Aid must be on location at all times.

A Director must be at least 21 years of age, and have a high school diploma or equivalency certificate, have completed two years of college with 18 semester hours of child development, or have equivalent experience or credentials.

An Early Childhood Teacher must be at least 19 years of age, and have completed two years of college with six semester hours in child care and development or have equivalent experience or credentials.

An Early Childhood Assistant must have a high school diploma or equivalency certificate (GED) and must work under the direct supervision of an Early Childhood Teacher.

Physical Space: A minimum of 55 square feet of indoor space per child is required for infants and toddlers. A minimum of 35 square feet of indoor space per child is required for children two years of age and older. A minimum of 75 square feet of outdoor space per child for the total number of children using the space at anyone time is required. The outdoor play area shall accommodate 25% of the licensed capacity at any one time. Indoor and outdoor areas must be designed to protect the health and safety of children. Equipment and materials must be in particular quantities for each age group, and include child-size tables and chairs and individual space for children's belongings. Inspection and approval of the facility by the Office of the State Fire Marshal and the Health Department is required. Licence must be prominently displayed.

Program: The child care program must provide written policies, a statement of purpose and the philosophy of the program to families. Cultural and ethnic diversity and personal privacy of children must be respected. A variety of activities (indoor and outdoor) and a daily routine which promotes the child's individual growth must also be provided.

Nutrition: Nutritious meals and snacks must be served. The children must be provided one-third to two-thirds of the daily nutritional requirements, depending on the length and time of day of the child's stay.

Discipline: Methods of disciplining children must be implemented in ways to help children develop self-control and assume responsibility for their own acts. No child may be subjected to spanking, hitting or any other corporal punishment. No child may be verbally abused, humiliated, deprived of meals or be punished for toileting accidents.

Children's Records/Health Requirements: Children must have a current medical report and necessary forms/permissions on file prior to enrollment. If a child becomes ill, the child must be isolated from the other children and the family must be contacted to remove the child from the child care program as soon as possible.

Sleeping Arrangements: A supervised nap period on cribs or cots is required of all children under age six who are in the program five hours or more each day. A rest period is required for children who are in attendance four consecutive hours or more.

Family Child Care Homes

Group Size and Ratio: Twelve is the maximum number of children, including a child care provider’s own children, under the age of 13 that can be cared for in a family child care home with an assistant. A child care provider alone may care for up to eight children. This number includes the child care provider’s own children. A child is considered school age if the child is at least five years of age and attending a full day of school. The ages of the children in care are further regulated as follows:

Staff:	Child Care Provider	Child Care Provider & Full-time Assistant
Maximum Group Size:	8*	8**
Age Groupings:	Up to 8 children under 13 years, with no more than 5 under 5 years & no more than 3 under 24 months <u>or</u> Up to 8 children under 13 years, with no more than 6 under 5 years and no more than 2 under 30 months <u>or</u> Up to 8 school agers	Up to 8 children under 5 years, with no more than 5 under 24 months
<p>* When an assistant is at least 14 years of age, and five years older than the oldest child in care and working under the direct supervision of a child care provider, a child care provider may care for up to four more school-age children, a maximum group of 12.</p> <p>** If the assistant is 18 years of age or older, a child care provider may also care for up to four more school age children, a maximum group of 12. The assistant may work independently with the children and without the direct supervision of the child care provider.</p>		

Whenever a child care provider exceeds eight children in care, a fire clearance must be obtained from the Office of the State Fire Marshal.

Transition Plan: When a child care provider wants to accept a sibling of a child who has been in care for more than 30 days and it will put the child care provider out of compliance in age groupings, the child care provider may accept the child following a DCFS approval plan to return to compliance within six months. The transition plan does not allow a child care provider to exceed the maximum group size at any time.

Child Care Provider: A family child care provider must be at least 18 years of age, be certified in the Heimlich Maneuver, CPR and First Aid, and provide a medical report with a tuberculosis skin test, submit three

references, demonstrate knowledge of hygiene, safety and nutrition. In addition, 15 hours of in-service training must be completed each year. Family members and assistants who are 18 years of age or older are subject to a Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System (CANTS) check, fingerprinting for a criminal history check, and a check of the Statewide Child Sex Offender Registry. Assistants and family members 13 to 17 years of age are subject to a CANTS check and a Law Enforcement Agency Data System (LEADS) check. The child care provider must have identified a person to supervise the children in an emergency.

Physical Space: The indoor and outdoor space must be safe for children and free from hazards. The home must be equipped with a working telephone, fire extinguisher, carbon monoxide detector, smoke detectors in each room where children nap or sleep, first aid kit, and must have emergency evacuation plans. Materials and equipment must be in sufficient quantity, available to the children for both indoor and outdoor play, and suitable to the ages of the children.

Handguns: Families must be notified if firearms are stored on the premises. Handguns are prohibited on the premises except in the possession of peace officers who reside in the home. Any other firearm must be kept disassembled in locked storage and safely away from children. Ammunition must be locked and stored separately from the firearm.

Program: Daily activities must be well balanced for active and quiet play, and geared to the individual needs of the children.

Nutrition: Nutritious meals and snacks must be served. The children must be provided one-third to two-thirds of the daily nutritional requirements, depending on the length and time of day of the child's stay.

Discipline: Methods of disciplining children must be carried out in ways to help children develop self-control and assume responsibility for their own acts. No child may be subjected to spankings, hitting or any other corporal punishment. No child may be verbally abused, humiliated, deprived of meals or be punished for toileting accidents.

Children's Records/Health Requirements: Each child must have a birth certificate, current medical report and necessary forms/permissions on file prior to enrollment. If a child becomes ill, the child must be isolated from the other children and the family must be contacted to remove the child from the home as soon as possible.

Sleeping Arrangements: Separate sleeping arrangements with individual bedding must be provided for each child. During naps, a twin size bed may be shared by two children under age four provided each child has individual sheets. Cots may be used for children 15 months or age and older.

Group Child Care Homes

Group Size and Ratio: Sixteen is the maximum number of children including the child care provider's own children under age 13 that can be cared for in a group child care home with a full time assistant. Ages of the children are further regulated as follows:

Staff:	Child Care Provider	Child Care Provider & Full-time Assistant
Maximum Group Size:	8 or 12*	8**
Age Groupings:	Up to 8 children under 13 years, with no more than 5 under 5 years & no more than 3 under 24 months <u>or</u> Up to 8 children under 5 years, with no more than 2 under 30 months <u>or</u> Up to 12 school agers	Up to 12 children under 6 years, with no more than 6 under 30 months. (No more than 4 under 15 months.) <u>or</u> Up to 12 children between 3 and 6 years. <u>or</u> Up to 4 more school agers
<p>* When an assistant is at least 14 years of age, and five years older than the oldest child in care and working under the direct supervision of a group child care provider, a child care provider may care for up to four more school-age children, a maximum group of 16.</p> <p>** If the assistant is 18 years of age or older, a child care provider may also care for up to four more school age children, a maximum group of 16. The assistant may work independently with the children and without the direct supervision of the child care provider.</p>		

A child is considered school age if the child is at least five years of age and attending a full day of school. Before accepting additional school age children, the child care provider must request in writing and receive an increase in the maximum group size from DCFS. To exceed eight children in care, a fire clearance must be obtained from the Office of the State Fire Marshal.

Transition Plan: When a child care provider wants to accept a sibling of a child who has been in care for more than 30 days, and it will put the child care provider out of compliance in age groupings, the child care provider may accept the child following a DCFS approval of a plan to return to compliance within six months. The transition plan does not allow a child care provider to exceed the maximum group size at any time.

Child Care Provider: A group home child care provider must be at least 21 years of age, provide a medical report with a tuberculosis skin test, submit three references, demonstrate knowledge of hygiene, safety and nutrition, and have the ability to relate well to families and children. A child care provider certified in CPR, the Heimlich Maneuver and First Aid must be on location at all times. The child care provider must have a high school diploma or equivalency certificate, have completed one year of college education or one year work experience in a licensed child care home, nursery school

kindergarten, or licensed child care program and have six semester hours of course work in child care or development, or a current Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. In addition, 15 hours of in-service training must be completed each year.

Child Care Providers, Family Members and Assistants: The child care provider, family members and assistants who are 18 years of age or older are subject to a Child Abuse and Neglect Tracking System (CANTS) check, a Law Enforcement Agency Data System (LEADS) check, fingerprinting for a criminal history check and must have three letters of reference on file. Family members and assistants 13 to 17 years of age are subject to a CANTS check and a LEADS check. Child care providers, their family members and assistants are checked with the Statewide Child Sex Offender Registry. In addition, the child care provider must have identified a person to supervise the children in an emergency. All full-time assistants must be at least 18 years of age.

Physical Space: The indoor and outdoor space must be safe for children and free from hazards. The home must be equipped with a working telephone, fire extinguisher, carbon monoxide detector, smoke detectors in each room where children nap or sleep, first aid kit, and must have emergency evacuation plans. Materials and equipment must be in sufficient quantity, available to the children for both indoor and outdoor play, and suitable to the ages of the children.

Handguns: Families must be notified if firearms are stored on the premises. Handguns are prohibited on the premises except in the possession of peace officers who reside in the home. Any other firearm must be kept disassembled in locked storage and safely away from children. Ammunition must be locked and stored separately from the firearm.

Program: Daily activities must be well balanced for active and quiet play, and geared to the individual needs of the children.

Nutrition: Nutritious meals and snacks must be served. The children must be provided one-third to two-thirds of the daily nutritional requirements, depending on the length and time of day of the child's stay.

Discipline: Methods of disciplining children must be carried out in ways to help children develop self-control and assume responsibility for their own acts. No child may be subjected to spankings, hitting or any other corporal punishment. Also, no child may be verbally abused, humiliated, deprived of meals or be punished for toileting accidents.

Children's Records/Health Requirements: Each child must have a birth certificate, current medical report and necessary forms/permissions on file prior to enrollment. If a child becomes ill, the child must be isolated from the other children and the family must be contacted to remove the child from the home as soon as possible.

Sleeping Arrangements: Separate sleep arrangements with individual bedding must be provided for each child. During naps, a twin size bed may be shared by two children under age four provided each child has individual sheets. Cots may be used for children 15 months of age and older.

Selecting Quality Child Care

When selecting child care, consider availability, affordability and quality. The following checklist can be used as a guide as you visit child care programs.

Health and Safety

- Is the facility attractive, clean, well-lit and adequately supervised with safety in mind?
- Are the cribs, high chairs, and other equipment safe, sanitary, and in good condition?
- Are infants placed on their backs for sleep?
- Are infants held while bottle fed?
- Does the program have pets? Are their shots up-to-date?
- Are the group sizes and child to staff ratios acceptable?
- Are there first aid supplies, smoke detectors and fire extinguishers? Is the child care provider trained in CPR, the Heimlich Maneuver and First Aid?
- Does the program conduct monthly fire, tornado and earthquake drills?
- Is there a space for each child's personal items? Does each child have their own crib or cot?
- Does the program offer transportation? Are car seats or proper restraints used?
- Are the restroom and diapering areas clean? Is there running water nearby for hand washing for adults and children?
- Is the kitchen clean and safe? Are the meals nutritious and appealing?
- Do the adults and children wash their hands before eating, after diapering, toileting, and nose wiping?
- Is there space inside and outside so all the children can move freely and safely? Is this space free of waste, protected from traffic, supervised and safe for all ages to play?

- Are hazardous materials stored out of reach, and placed in locked cabinets?
- Is the program free of pests?

Teacher or Child Care Provider

- Does the child care provider appear to be confident, loving, warm, friendly, calm and patient?
- Does the child care provider have child care training or experience working with children? How many years? What age groups?
- Does the child care provider understand what children can do at various developmental milestones?
- Can the child care provider describe what a typical day's schedule might be like for your child?
- Is the child care provider flexible about changing activities to meet the needs and interests of the children?
- Does the child care provider try to develop an open sharing relationship with you?
- Does the child care provider listen to what you want for your child and ask questions about how you do things?
- Does the child care provider encourage families to visit unannounced at any time of the day?
- Will the child care provider supply you with personal references or families that have previously used or are currently using care?
- Does the child care provider comfort and reassure children when they need it?
- Does the provider respond promptly to infants cues or signs of distress?
- Does the child care provider respect children's desires to carry favored objects around with them?

Selecting Quality Child Care *cont.*

Program

- Is the child care program or family child care home licensed with the Illinois DCFS or license-exempt?
- Does the program accept IDHS child care assistance?
- Does the program participate in the ExceleRate Illinois program? Is the program's license current and posted? Is the program accredited?
- What is the program's policy for vacations, holidays and illnesses? Are there any extra program costs?
- What is the program's philosophy and goals?
- Are the values of the program compatible with your values?
- How are families involved in the program?
- Is the daily time schedule flexible and dictated more by the children's needs than by adult's?
- Does the daily schedule provide for active and quiet times, and indoor and outdoor play?
- Are children engaged in constructive play that promotes exploration and the ability to select what they want from a sufficient number of choices?
- Are transitions from one activity to another generally smooth and planned?
- Is there time to play alone and to work as a group?
- Is TV viewing and computer usage limited to short times and child appropriate programs?
- How many different child care providers will be with your child during the course of the day?
- How frequent is staff turnover? Can you expect the same person to care for your child for the year?
- Is independence encouraged through the use of self-help skills and decision making opportunities?
- Does the program offer speech, occupational or physical therapy for children who need it? Are these services allowed to come into the classroom?

Environment

- Are a variety of activities, equipment and materials available, both indoors and outdoors, to help children learn and grow socially, mentally and physically?
 - art materials (markers, crayons, paper, scissors)
 - music equipment
 - sand & water play materials
 - dress up clothes
 - climbing equipment
 - manipulatives (Legos, Bristle Blocks, pegs)
 - blocks
 - balls
 - puzzles
 - infant toys
 - books
 - cooking materials
 - dolls
 - puppets
 - climbers
 - scooters, bikes

- Does the environment contain soft elements (pillows, bean bag chairs, stuffed animals, puppets)?

- Can children reach materials and supplies without asking for adult assistance?

- Is the room cheerful and decorated at the child's eye-level with pictures of children's artwork, and familiar objects and people?

- Can toys be carried and moved about in the environment as children choose?

- Do the pictures on the walls, the toys on the shelves, and books represent a variety of ages, races, gender and ethnicity in a positive manner?

- Are sturdy books provided representing a variety of topics?

- Does the child care provider frequently read to children individually and in small groups?

- Are boys and girls offered the same opportunities to use materials or take part in activities?

- Is there a quiet area of the room where a child can retreat by him/herself if needed?

Selecting Quality Child Care *cont.*

Interactions

- Is staffing adequate to allow the child care provider the opportunity to have frequent conversations with families and children?
- Does the child care provider prepare the environment for the children in advance to allow for predictability and repetition?
- Does the child care provider encourage children to care about and respect each other and the materials in the child care environment?
- Does the child care provider treat each child as an individual?
- Does the child care provider talk and listen to children at their eye level?
- Does the child care provider play with the children and model how to play?
- Does the child care provider label or name objects, describe events and reflect feelings to help children learn new words?
- Does the child care provider set limits in a way that does not punish or shame children?
- Are the limits for children and families clear, consistent, appropriate and do you agree with the limits set by the child care provider?
- Are children acknowledged for their efforts and accomplishments and helped to feel increasingly competent?
- Do children have opportunities to reason and to respond to "what", "how" and "what if" questions?
- Are children encouraged to resolve conflicts between themselves in an acceptable manner and/or with the support of the child care provider?
- Does the child care provider offer verbal or written feedback to the families on a daily basis?
- Does the child care provider work with other teachers to smooth and minimize transitions?

Knowing the Rules

A Summary of Licensing Standards for Child Care in Illinois + A Guide to Selecting Quality Child Care

In Illinois, the Child Care Act of 1969 (as amended) is the law which requires the licensing of child care centers, family child care homes and group child care homes. Child care licensing is a form of consumer protection. The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) regulates child care programs by requiring child care providers to meet minimum health and safety standards. This license must be on display at the program or home. State licensing representatives monitor each child care program to determine if they meet minimum health and safety requirements and to ensure compliance with the standards. Programs should distribute a summary of the licensing standards to families or guardians at the time of enrollment. A child care program, family child care home, and group child care home license must be renewed every three years. Both the Child Care Act and the Licensing Standards are subject to change.

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United Way
of Greater St. Louis





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Children's Home + Aid Resource and Referral Agency