



PARENTS' GUIDE TO LICENSED CHILD CARE

◆ **Choosing care for your child is a significant decision.**

When you entrust the care of your child to another person, you are making an important decision. Visit, ask questions, and carefully compare several programs. Licensed care includes child care homes, group homes, and centers. Your choice depends on what you want and need for your child.

◆ **Licensing is a key to quality child care.**

Licensing promotes good care by setting basic standards. Before a center, group home, or home is granted a child care license, it must meet minimum health, safety, and program requirements (see summary below). A licensing representative from the Department of Health and Social Services visits and inspects the facility and investigates complaints. The goal of licensing is to prevent risks to children; however, licensing cannot guarantee that a facility meets all requirements at all times.



◆ **You as an informed parent are a key to quality child care.**

Parents are responsible for choosing and monitoring their child's care. Licensors generally visit once a year, but you visit each time you take your child. Visit unexpectedly sometimes or in the middle of the day. Keep an eye on the quality of care. What do you see when you visit? Is the environment safe? Are caregivers capable and nurturing? How many children are present? Are meals nutritious? Are activities appropriate? Watch how your infant responds to the program and listen to what your child says. You are the person best able to decide whether the child care program meets your standards for safety, health, and quality.

◆ **If you have questions or concerns about your child's care.**

Discuss concerns with your caregiver. Talk to the caregiver if you observe health or safety problems or if you feel the program needs improvement. If you are still concerned, or if you believe children may be in danger or a standard is violated, contact your local licensing office. The Child Care Program Office will investigate your complaint. Your local licensing office address and phone number is:

Department of Health and Social Services
Child Care Program Office
3601 C Street – Suite 140
P.O. Box 241809
Anchorage, AK 99524
(907) 269-4500 or toll free within Alaska at 1-888-268-4632

HOW MANY CHILDREN MAY HOMES, GROUP HOMES, AND CENTERS CARE FOR? (Children under the age of 13, including children related to caregivers under the age of 12)

CHILD CARE HOMES

- No more than 8 children total under age 13, including caregiver's own children under age 12
- No more than 5 children without Fire Marshal approval
- No more than 3 children under 30 months
- No more than 2 non-ambulatory children
- At least 1 adult caregiver
- No more than 5 children in nighttime care including caregiver's own children under age 18

CHILD CARE GROUP HOMES

- No more than 12 children total under age 13
- No more than 5 children under 30 months
- No more than 4 non-ambulatory children
- No more than 5 children in nighttime care including caregiver's own children under age 18
- 2 caregivers required
- Exception: one caregiver may care for
 - 8 children if home requirements are met
 - 10 children if all are over 30 months, 12 children if all are school age **AND**
 - caregiver has completed one year of licensed home child care or the equivalent **OR**
 - caregiver meets the college credit, CDA, or Montessori credential requirements

CHILD CARE CENTERS

- 13 or more children
- 1 caregiver for every 5 infants (birth through 18 months)
- 1 caregiver for every 6 toddlers (19 months up to 36 months)
- 1 caregiver for every 10 preschool children (3 and 4 year olds)
- 1 caregiver for every 14 kindergarten children (5 and 6 year olds)
- 1 caregiver for every 18 school age children (7 through 12 years old)

SUMMARY OF STATE CHILD CARE LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

PARENTS

- Are responsible for selecting safe, appropriate care for their child
- Are responsible for monitoring their child's care
- Provide current emergency information and immunization records for their child, and update it at least semi-annually
- Are encouraged to visit their child anytime the child is in care
- Receive written child care policies

LICENSING

- Child care license is required if more than 4 children (not related to caregiver) are in care
- License must be renewed every 2 years
- Facility (including building, staff and program) is assessed before a license is issued
- Complaints are investigated
- Licensing files are open to public review

CAREGIVERS

- Are required to care for children in a safe, healthy way
- May not have a physical, behavioral, or domestic violence problem that poses a significant risk to children in care
- Administrator, caregivers of a facility, and those 16 or over having contact with children in the facility must have a valid criminal history check that is conducted by the State of Alaska Background Check Unit.
- Administrator, caregivers of a facility, and those 16 or over having contact with children in the facility must be fingerprinted
- Caregivers meet early childhood training requirements
- Caregivers know the whereabouts of children at all times

SAFETY

- Children are always supervised by an adult

- Caregiver with First Aid and CPR training is always present
- Facility is free of hazards inside and out
- Medicine and toxic materials are labeled and stored safely out of reach
- Firearms and ammunition are prohibited in a child care center. Firearms and ammunition must be stored as required in regulation for a child care home and group home
- Electric outlets have child proof cover caps if children under age 5 are in care
- Emergency information is kept for each child
- Facility must meet specific requirements for transporting children

HEALTH

- Facility meets sanitation and safety standards
- Meals and snacks are nutritious
- Children are immunized or have a valid exemption
- Parents are notified if their child is exposed to a contagious or communicable disease
- Facility must meet regulations if caring for mildly ill children
- Facility may not care for a seriously ill child unless a medical provider approves attendance
- Drinking water is safe
- Smoking is not allowed
- Medicine is given only with parent permission
- Food preparation and handling are sanitary

EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

- Furniture and equipment are safe and durable
- Infant walkers are not allowed
- Toys are adequate and varied
- Children have storage space for their belongings
- Children under age 5 must have a cot/mat/bed and bedding that is clean and sanitary for resting
- Infants must sleep in a safe crib or playpen without materials that

could increase the risk of suffocation

PROGRAM

- Promotes children's healthy development
- Includes quiet and active, group and individual, indoor and outdoor activities
- Program includes minimum of 20 minutes of vigorous physical activity for every 3 hours facility is open between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m.
- TV, movie viewing and computer and video game playing are limited to children's programs and do not exceed 1½ hours in a 24-hour period
- Computer learning activities do not exceed 2 hours a day
- High risk activities are not allowed
- Parent permission is required for moderate risk activities (for example, field trips)

BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE

- Is positive, and never cruel, humiliating, or damaging to the child
- Sets realistic expectations and clear and consistent limits
- Is not related to eating, napping, or toileting
- Child may not be removed from other children for more than 10 minutes
- Corporal punishment of children in care is not allowed. (Corporal punishment means "the infliction of bodily pain as a penalty for a disapproved behavior. It includes shaking, spanking, delivering a blow with a part of the body or an object, slapping, punching, pulling or any other action that seeks to induce pain.")

FIRE SAFETY

- Facility meets fire safety standards
- Emergency evacuation plan is practiced monthly and documented