



SUMMARY OF LICENSING STANDARDS FOR DAY CARE CENTERS

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DISCIPLINE POLICY

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CHILD CARE

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Introduction

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is responsible for licensing day care centers. When a day care center is licensed, it means that a DCFS licensing representative has inspected the facility and the facility was found to meet the minimum licensing requirements. A license is valid for three years. The day care center's license must be posted. It will indicate the maximum number of children allowed in the facility and the areas where children may receive care.

Licensed day care facilities are inspected annually by DCFS licensing staff. If a complaint has been received regarding a violation of the licensing standards of a day care center, a licensing representative will conduct a licensing complaint investigation to determine if the alleged violation should be substantiated or unsubstantiated. Individuals may contact the Day Care Information Line to learn of substantiated violations.

Day Care Information Line

1-877-746-0829

This statewide toll-free information line provides information to the public on the past history and record, including substantiated violations, of licensed day care homes, day care centers, and group day care homes. This number operates Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Summary of Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers

The following is a summary of the licensing standards for day care centers. It has been prepared for you so that you may monitor the care provided to your child. This is a summary and does not include all of the licensing standards for a day care center. State licensing standards are minimum standards. If you observe a violation of any of these standards, you are encouraged to discuss your concerns with the day care center operator. In most cases, parents and day care operators are able to resolve the parents' concerns and issues. If you believe the day care operator is not responding to your concerns and may not be meeting state licensing standards, you may make a complaint to the local DCFS Licensing Office or by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-2873 and stating that you want to make a licensing complaint. A DCFS licensing representative will investigate your complaint and report the results back to you. The day care center is required to provide a copy of its own written policies regarding the operation of the facility to each staff person and to parents of enrolled children.

Staffing

- The day care center must have a qualified child care director on site at all times. The director must be at least 21 years old, have completed two years of college or have equivalent experience and credentials.
- Early childhood teachers must be at least 19 years old, have two years of college or have equivalent experience and credentials.
- School-age workers must be at least 19 years of age and at least five years older than the oldest child in their care. They must have completed one year of college or have the equivalent experience and credentials.
- Early childhood assistants and school-age assistants must have a high school diploma or the equivalent and must work under direct supervision of an early childhood teacher or a school-age worker.
- Student and youth aides must be at least 14 years of age, at least five years older than the oldest child in their care, and must work under direct supervision of an early childhood teacher or a school-age worker.

- Student and youth aides are not generally counted for purposes of maintaining staff/child ratios.
- The director and all child care staff must have 15 hours of in-service training annually.
- All staff must have current medical reports on file and are subject to background checks for any record of criminal conviction or child abuse and neglect.
- A person certified in first aid, including CPR and the Heimlich maneuver, must be present at all times.

Group Size and Staff Requirements:

AGE OF CHILDREN	STAFF/CHILD RATIO	MAXIMUM GROUP SIZE
Infants (6 weeks through 14 months)	1 to 4	12
Toddlers (15 through 23 months)	1 to 5	15
Two years	1 to 8	16
Three years	1 to 10	20
Four years	1 to 10	20
Five years (preschool)	1 to 20	20
School-age: Kindergartners present	1 to 20	30

- Exception: One early childhood teacher and an assistant may supervise a group of up to 30 children if all of the children are at least five years of age.
- Whenever children of different ages are combined, the staff/child ratio and maximum group size must be based on the age of the youngest child in the group.

General Program Requirements

- Parents must be allowed to visit the center without an appointment any time during normal hours of operation.
- Staff must demonstrate respect for each child enrolled regardless of gender, ability, cultural, ethnic or religious differences.
- There must be a balance of active and quiet activity. Daily indoor and outdoor activities are to be provided for children to make use of both large and small muscles.
- In pre-school programs where children receive care for less than three hours per day, outdoor activity is not required.
- Children may not be left unattended at any time.

Infants and Toddlers

- Infants and toddlers must be in separate space away from older children.
- A refrigerator and sink must be easily accessible.
- Toys and indoor equipment must be cleaned and disinfected daily. Safe, durable equipment and play materials must be provided.
- Either the day care center or the parent may provide food for infants not consuming table food. Feeding times and amounts consumed must be documented in writing.
- No food other than formula, milk, breast milk or water may be placed in a bottle for infant feeding. Microwaves are not to be used for bottle warming.
- Children who cannot turn over alone must be placed on their backs.
- The facility must have a clearly defined diaper changing area with the procedures for changing diapers clearly posted. A hand-washing sink must be accessible for hand washing.
- Staffing changing diapers must wash their hands and the child's hands with soap and running water after diapering.
- Information about feeding, elimination and other important information must be recorded in writing and made available to parents when the child is picked up at the end of the day.

School-Age Children

- The facility must have a designated area for school-age children so they do not interfere with the care of younger children.
- Clear definitions of responsibility and procedures are to be established among parent, day care center and school when children move to and from school.
- A variety of developmentally appropriate activities and materials must be available for children. Opportunities must be provided to do home work, if requested.

Evening, Night and Weekend Care

- Family-like groups of mixed ages are allowed.
- Staff must be awake at all times and in the sleeping area whenever children are sleeping.
- Each child must have an individual cot, bed or crib.
- An evening meal and a bedtime snack must be served.
- Breakfast must be served to all children who have been at the facility throughout the night and are present between 6:30 a.m. and 8:30 am.

Enrollment and Discharge

- Parents must be provided the names, business address and telephone number of persons legally responsible for the program.
- Parents must be provided, in writing, information on the program, fees, arrival and departure policies explaining to the parents and guardians what actions the caregiver will take if children are not picked up at the agreed upon time, and the guidance and discipline policies.
- Parents must complete an enrollment application, which includes emergency numbers and persons authorized to pick up the child.
- A child may only be released to a parent or other responsible person designated by the parent.
- Daily arrival and departure logs must be kept by the center.

Guidance and Discipline

- Parents must be given a copy of the guidance and discipline policy.
- The following are prohibited:
 - corporal punishment
 - threatened or actual withdrawal of food, rest or use of the bathroom
 - abusive or profane language
 - public or private humiliation
 - emotional abuse, including shaming, rejecting, terrorizing or isolating a child.
- “Time-out” is to be limited to one minute per year of age. “Time-out” may not be used for children less than two years of age.

Transportation

- The driver must be 21 years of age and hold a driver’s license that has been continuously valid for three years.
- Children must not be allowed to stand or sit on the floor of the vehicle. Age appropriate safety restraints must be used when transporting children in vehicles other than school buses.
- The driver must make sure that a responsible person is present to take charge of a child when delivered to his or her destination.

Health Requirements for Children

- A medical report indicating that the child has been appropriately immunized must be on file for each child. A tuberculin skin test is to be included in the initial exam unless waived by a physician.
- The medical report is valid for two years for infants and preschool children. Exams for school-age children are required consistent with the requirements of the public schools.
- Children aged one to six years must have either a lead risk assessment or a lead screening.
- Water must be freely available to all children.
- Children's hands must be washed with soap and water upon arrival at the center, before and after meals or using the toilet, after wiping or blowing their noses, after outdoor play and after coming into contact with any soiled objects.
- Prescription and non-prescription medication may be accepted only in its original container. The center must maintain a record of the dates, times administered, dosages, prescription number (if applicable) and the name of the person administering the medication.
- Medication must be kept in locked cabinets or other containers that are inaccessible to children.

Nutritions and Meals

- Menus must be posted.
- Meals and snacks must meet nutritional guidelines.
- Children in care two to five hours must be served a snack. Children in care five to 10 hours must be served a meal and two snacks or two meals and one snack. Children in care more than 10 hours must be served two meals and two snacks or one meal and three snacks.

Napping and Sleeping

- Children under six years of age who remain five or more hours must have the opportunity to rest or nap.
- Infants must sleep in safe, sturdy, freestanding cribs or portable cribs.
- Toddlers may use either stacking cots or lull-size cribs.
- A cot or bed must be provided for each toddler or preschool child in attendance five or more hours. Each cot, bed or crib must be labeled with the name of the child.

Physical Space

- Infants and toddlers must be housed and cared for at ground level unless special approval has been granted from the Department.
- Indoor space must provide a safe, comfortable environment for the children. Floors and floor coverings must be washable and free from drafts and dampness.
- Hot and cold running water must be provided.
- Hazardous items must be inaccessible to children.
- Parents must be notified before pesticides are applied, unless in an emergency.
- Exits must be unlocked and clear of equipment and debris.
- Drills for fire and tornado must be conducted. A floor plan must be posted in every room indicating the areas providing the most safety in the case of a tornado and the primary and secondary exit routes in case of fire.
- Smoking or the use of tobacco products in any form is prohibited in the child care center or in the presence of children while on the playground or on trips away from the center.
- Play materials must be durable and free from hazardous characteristics.
- The facility must be cleaned daily and kept in sanitary condition at all times.
- First-aid kits must be maintained and readily available for use.

Outdoor Play Area

- Play space must be fenced or otherwise enclosed or protected from traffic and other hazards. There must be a shaded area in summer to protect children from excessive sun exposure.
- All areas of the outdoor play space must be visible to staff at all times.
- Equipment must be free of sharp points or corners, splinters, protruding nails or bolts, loose or rusty parts, the potential for entrapment and/or other hazards.
- Protective surfaces must be provided under equipment from which a child might fall.
- All swimming pools must be fenced or otherwise inaccessible to children.
- During hours of operation and at all times that children are present there must be a means for parents of enrolled children to have direct telephone contact with a center staff person.

This summary has been developed to assist parents in monitoring the care provided by the day care center:

For a complete copy of the Licensing Standards, write or call

*Department of Children and Family Services
Office of Child and Family Policy
406 East Monroe Street
Springfield, Illinois 62701
Telephone (217) 524-1983*

Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers may also be accessed through the DCFS web site: www.state.il.us/dcfi and following the links to Part 407, Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers. You may also contact your nearest DCFS office.

PHILOSOPHY

Discipline is the ongoing process of helping children to develop their controls so that they can manage their own behavior in socially acceptable ways.

HOW DISCIPLINE WILL BE IMPLEMENTED BY STAFF

Acceptable behavior is encouraged by giving positive verbal rewards. This reinforces a child's good feeling about his/her behavior and serves as an example to the other children. Asking a child to stop and think about his/her unsafe or inappropriate behavior enables that child to work at self-control.

For a child not cooperating in a group listening situation, the child is seated by a teacher and reminded of classroom rules. Removal from the group (whether activities are redirected or child assigned to another area) is the next strategy used for a child who continually demonstrates inappropriate behavior. Modeling appropriate behaviors by the teachers to the child/ren will be the foremost form of discipline at Kids in Harmony.

Methods for preventing and coping with inappropriate or undesirable behavior in the classroom include:

- Recognizing positive behavior
- Redirecting a child to involvement in another area
- Offering choices
- Planned ignoring of negative behavior
- Talking with a child about his or her behavior
- Offering help
- Limiting space and materials
- Losing privileges

THE FOLLOWING DISCIPLINE TECHNIQUES ARE PROHIBITED:

Corporal punishment is not an accepted method of dealing with young children's behavior. Children will not be hit, slapped, shaken, pinched or spanked in any manner while attending this preschool. Verbal humiliation (i.e., screaming, ridiculing, blaming, teasing, insulting, name calling or threatening the child with punishment) will not be accepted.

The staff will never use abusive or profane language or deprive children of rest or use of restrooms. Children will not be punished for toilet accidents. Food will not be withheld as a form of punishment. This will be a violation of the state and city's license regulation.

Likewise, parents are expected to observe this policy while in school. This discipline insensitivity causes the child embarrassment, low self-esteem and lack of self-respect.

HOW PARENTS WILL BE INVOLVED IN GUIDANCE PROCESS

- The director or teacher will verbally notify the child's parents if a pattern of unacceptable/unsafe behavior is noted.
- As needed, the teacher will discuss with the parent(s) the child's behavior. If an unacceptable behavior occurs during the day or a behavior is uncharacteristic of the child, a behavior report will be completed and retained in the child's file.
- The director may request a formal conference with parent(s).
- If deemed necessary, the parent may be asked to pick up the child from the center and/or remove the child for the next school day.
- It may be suggested that the child be involved in a behavior modification program, with the parents having the option of being involved in the process. A list of appropriate schools will be furnished to the parents.

HOW CHILDREN WILL BE INVOLVED IN THE PROCESS

- Children will be aware of the classroom guidelines. They will be reminded of The guidelines throughout the day.
- Older children will be involved in creating the class rules.
- Both preschool and kindergartners will have reasonable opportunity to resolve their own conflicts.

DISCHARGE

Any child who, after attempts have been made to meet the child's individual needs, demonstrates the inability to benefit from the type of care offered by the facility, or whose presence is detrimental to the group, shall be discharged from the facility. Refer to Kids In Harmony Parent Handbook for discharge policy and procedure.

TOUCH POLICY

It is the policy of our school to inform parents of the nature and type of routine physical contact the children will experience while in our care. It is the belief of our school that children need nurturing and adult physical contact for their healthy emotional and social development. This contact can be described as follows:

- **NURTURING**

This includes hugs and non-intimate kisses on forehead or cheeks, hand holding, gentle tickling, caring and cuddling. This type of contact is never made against the expressed wishes of the children.

- **SAFETY AND GUIDANCE**

This includes restraining children from harmful situations, separating physically conflicting children, directing children by gently leading or guiding them and administering first aid to injuries.

- **HYGIENIC**

This includes face and handwashing, assisting with bathroom duties (as appropriate to the child's age), diaper changes, examining rashes or unusual marks, nose blowing and assisting with or conducting necessary clothing changes.

It is also our belief that it is normal and healthy for children to express affection with their peers. This includes hugs non-intimate kisses and handholding. This type of contact is never made against the expressed wishes of the children.

Top 10 Signs of a Good Kindergarten Classroom

Kindergarten is a time for children to expand their love of learning, their general knowledge, their ability to get along with others, and their interest in reaching out to the world. While kindergarten marks an important transition from preschool to the primary grades, it is important that children still get to be children -- getting kindergartners ready for elementary school does not mean substituting academics for play time, forcing children to master first grade “skills,” or relying on standardized tests to assess children’s success.

Kindergarten “curriculum” actually includes such events as snack time, recess, and individual and group activities in addition to those activities we think of as traditionally educational. Developmentally appropriate kindergarten classrooms encourage the growth of children’s self-esteem, their cultural identities, their independence and their individual strengths. Kindergarten children will continue to develop control of their own behavior through the guidance and support of warm, caring adults. At this stage, children are already eager to learn and possess an innate curiosity. Teachers with a strong background in early childhood education and child development can best provide for children what they need to grow physically, emotionally, and intellectually. Here are 10 signs of a good kindergarten classroom:

1. Children are playing and working with materials or other children. They are not aimlessly wandering or forced to sit quietly for long periods of time.
2. Children have access to various activities throughout the day, such as block building, pretend play, picture books, paints and other art materials, and table toys such as legos, pegboards, and puzzles. Children are not all doing the same things at the same time.
3. Teachers work with individual children, small groups, and the whole group at different times during the day. They do not spend time only with the entire group.
4. The classroom is decorated with children’s original artwork, their own writing with invented spelling, and dictated stories.
5. Children learn numbers and the alphabet in the context of their everyday experiences. Exploring the natural world of plants and animals, cooking, taking attendance, and serving snack are all meaningful activities to children.
6. Children work on projects and have long periods of time (at least one hour) to play and explore. Filling out worksheets should not be their primary activity.
7. Children have an opportunity to play outside every day that weather permits. This play is never sacrificed for more instructional time.
8. Teachers read books to children throughout the day, not just at group story time.
9. Curriculum is adapted for those who are ahead as well as those who need additional help. Because children differ in experiences and background, they do not learn the same things at the same time in the same way.
10. Children and their parents look forward to school. Parents feel safe sending their child to kindergarten. Children are happy; they are not crying or regularly sick.

Individual kindergarten classrooms will vary, and curriculum will vary according to the interests and backgrounds of the children. But all developmentally appropriate kindergarten classrooms will have one thing in common: the focus will be on the development of the child as a whole.

Early Years Are Learning Years Helping young children start school

Even before kindergarten, parents should be aware of ways to make the most of learning opportunities for their young children. One important choice for many families in their child's early years involves preschool or child care.

The first years of a child's life are a crucial development period, and children who are nurtured and stimulated during these years are much more prepared for formal reading and math and are more likely to have the social skills they will need when it's time for kindergarten. Parents are a child's first teachers, but early childhood education programs are also important, especially with the growing number of families with one parent, and families where both parents work full-time.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has approved new Early Childhood Program Standards that outline what NAEYC believes every child care, preschool and other early childhood education programs should provide to nurture the learning and development of young children. These standards can be used as a guideline by parents to determine the quality of a preschool or child care program.

As the leading organization of early childhood educators, NAEYC established an accreditation system in 1985 to raise the quality of early childhood education and help families identify good preschool and child care programs. To earn NAEYC accreditation, programs must meet national performance standards of quality that go beyond most state health and safety licensing requirements. Teachers and staff in these programs receive ongoing training, and the programs are observed by independent, professional experts, and reviewed by a national accreditation panel.

The following guidelines, based on the NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards, can help you identify high-quality early care and education programs for your young children.

Preschool and child care programs should focus on children:

- Watch to see that children interact with other children and adults, so they can build healthy relationships.
- Ask about the curriculum, which should include a variety of activities appropriate for the children's ages and needs.

Preschool and child care programs should have qualified staff:

- The staff should have the educational background to promote your child's learning and development. Ask what degrees and training teachers have.
- Ask how long teachers and staff have been with the program. Teachers that stay in the program longer are more able to focus their attention on the children and establish bonds with them.

Preschool and child care programs should build relationships with families:

- Program staff should work with families to meet their child's needs. Ask how information and concerns are communicated between staff and families.
- Check that the program's policies allow families to visit their child during the program day.

Preschool and child care programs should be well-run:

- Check that the program is licensed by the state. The facilities need to be age-appropriate and well maintained, both indoors and outdoors.
- Check whether the program has policies and practices to help keep children safe from preventable illness and injury.
- Ask about the child-to-teacher ratio, which helps determine how much individual attention your child will get. For example, there should be at least one adult for every ten 4-year-olds.

Evaluating a program based on these standards will help you choose a high-quality program for your child that will allow them to get a great start on learning.

Children's illnesses and child care

The last thing a parent needs before she's even had her first cup of coffee is a call at work from a child care provider who says her child is sick. The last thing a child care provider needs is to discover an ill child in her care who may have exposed other children in the program or center.

But illness, young children, and child care are facts of life. Young children get sick more frequently than adults because their immune systems can not fight disease as well. Considering the large number of children in child care, both parents and child care providers must learn to recognize whether children should attend child care, or stay at home.

Our first instinct may be to exclude children from early childhood programs when they demonstrate signs of a common cold, but children who are sneezing or sniffing may actually have exposed others before seeming ill. And, many illnesses stop being contagious shortly after treatment is started.

All adults should learn to identify the signs of serious illness in children, and when to seek immediate medical attention. Up-to-date immunizations and frequent, proper handwashing help prevent illness in centers and homes. As for whether mildly ill children should attend early childhood programs or stay at home, the basic question to ask is whether or not the child can participate comfortably and receive adequate, appropriate care without interfering with the care of other children.

Parents:

- Be familiar with your child care program's policies that address excluding ill children. Well-informed and regularly-implemented policies help programs provide appropriate care for ill children as well as a healthy environment for all children and staff.
- Notify caregivers about illness that occurred the night before. We've all seen children go to bed with a fever, then wake up well and eager to attend their program or center.
- Never pressure a caregiver to include an ill child or place an ill child in care without notifying the program. Remember programs have a responsibility to maintain a healthy environment for all children, staff, and families.
- Plan alternate arrangements ahead of time for care of your child when he is too ill to attend child care.

Programs

- Maintain written program policies on inclusion/exclusion of children, carefully evaluating what the program can handle adequately. Make sure these policies are communicated to parents at the time of enrollment or orientation and shared at other times as needed.
- Use proper prevention such as frequent handwashing by both caregivers and children; and adopt universal precautions to handle potential exposure to blood and blood-containing body fluids. Wash and disinfect equipment (such as toys and items mouthed by infants) on a frequent, regularly-scheduled basis.
- Be sensitive to the needs of parents who may have limited leave time at their own places of employment. Lost work in many cases means lowered income or even the loss of a job. Make the situation work best for all parties involved.

The information above complements, but is not a substitute for the advice of a child's health provider. If you are uncertain about the nature or management of an illness, call or consult a paediatric professional to help you determine how sick the child is and what care the child needs.

Potty Training

Potty training can be one of the most stressful times of life for both parents and toddlers, so to be sure that the process goes as smoothly as possible, parents need to be sure that their children are ready for this big developmental step.

Most children begin potty training by the time they are 2, but some start much earlier and some benefit from waiting longer. The appropriate potty training age varies from child to child, even among siblings, so it is important for parents to have a grasp on specific signs that show a child is ready to move from using diapers to using a potty. If you wait until your child is ready, rather than forcing potty training on him or her at a certain age, you will find that your child will begin consistently using the potty without much hassle or too many accidents.

Because potty training can be very daunting for many children, begin at a time in life that is not already stressful for your child. For example, if you have recently had another child, your potty-training child, although he or she is fully capable of learning to use the toilet, may resist training techniques and prefer to have mommy or daddy change his or her diaper, just like the new baby. Other reasons to delay potty training include divorce, moving to a new house, adverse medical developments, or any other major changes in a child's life. So it's important to take into account any possible reasons that could make potty training a real battle.

You will notice a number of signs that indicate your-child's readiness to begin potty training, even if he or she does not voice this opinion. At this stage in life, your child is becoming more independent, and wants to do things by his/herself, such as getting dressed in the morning or cleaning up the play area. Your child may also imitate adults or older children and can follow simple commands. These things all show that your child is mature enough to learn to use a toilet.

Begin potty training after you notice that your child is having regular bowel movements. He or she also should be able to stay dry for a few hours at a time and during many nights and naps. Other signs that you child is ready to begin potty training include:

1. Showing discomfort with a dirty diaper
2. Asking questions about bathroom use
3. Telling an adult when he/she has a dirty diaper
4. Wanting to begin potty training
5. Knowing when he or she needs to use a toilet

Overall, the most important reason to wait for these signs is that your child will more easily go through the potty training process if it is not forced. Potty training can be frustrating otherwise. Some parents begin with children as young as 18 months. Others wait until their toddler is closer to 3 years of age to even start the process. Don't be concerned if your child is not ready as soon as you think he or she should be. If you have any questions about age-appropriate potty training techniques, your pediatrician should be able to help you. Start potty training when your child is ready, and it should be smoother sailing than you expect.