

## SUMMARY OF LICENSING REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILD CARE AGENCIES

This is a guide for licensed child care agencies. The Department of Human Services licenses child care agencies with five (5) or more unrelated children operating for three (3) or more hours per day unless exempt. Questions about these requirements should be referred to the local DHS office. This summary does not contain all of the requirements; therefore, you may ask your agency for the complete set of licensure rules for child care agencies or you can access the rules through the [Department's website](#).

### **Ownership, Organization, and Administration**

- General liability, automobile liability, medical payment, sexual abuse and molestation insurance coverage shall be maintained on the operations of the child care agency's facilities and vehicles.
- Child care agencies must operate within their same ownership and legal business status as listed on the license.
- Enrollment of children less than six (6) weeks of age is prohibited.
- Children shall not be in care for more than twelve (12) hours in a twenty-four (24) hour period except in special circumstances.
- Sharing space is not permitted between agencies except for gym, cafeteria, or playground spaces as long as the children from the different programs are not using the space at the same time.
- The agency must maintain written documentation that the parent performed an on-site visit to the agency to review the agency's facility and parent engagement strategies prior to enrolling the child (not required for children of homeless families).
- Child care agencies shall establish a drug testing policy for all staff having direct contact with children.
- A copy of the agency's policies, procedures, and the Department's Summary of Licensing Requirements shall be supplied to the parent upon admission of the child.
- Parents shall be permitted to see the professional credential(s) of staff upon request.
- During operating hours, parents shall be permitted immediate access to their children, unless legal documents prohibit or restrict access.
- Agency shall have ongoing communication with parents/guardians to include curriculum, changes in personnel, changes in policies and/or substantive licensing requirements, and any changes affecting children's routine care, and shall document such communication in writing.
- Child care agencies shall provide information about the benefits of immunizing children against influenza and other communicable diseases each August or September to parents/guardians of all children enrolled in the child care agency and document such communication in writing.
- The licensee and agency staff shall not disclose or knowingly permit the use by other persons, any information concerning a child or family except as required by law.
- The child care agency's current license and quality rating improvement system score shall be posted near the main entrance.
- A written expulsion policy shall be clearly articulated to parents and staff.

### **Staff**

- The director must be onsite for 50% of the agency's monthly operating hours.

- Family and group home child care agencies must notify parents in advance of the person in charge during primary educator's absence.
- A staff member shall be designated to be in charge of the child care agency in the absence of the primary educator/director and the name of the person shall be communicated to staff. Such person shall be familiar with child care agency policies/procedures. The primary educator/director or designee shall ensure that the designated staff person is physically, mentally, and emotionally capable of safely and appropriately providing care for children.
- Prior to having any contact with children, new employees shall receive orientation and pre-service training and shaken baby syndrome/abusive head trauma/child maltreatment training.
- Substitutes and practicum students providing services for more than 36 hours in a calendar year shall meet background check requirements and have a physical exam prior to beginning duties. In addition, they shall receive training on the agency policies and procedures regarding emergency preparedness plans, reporting of child abuse, neglect, and maltreatment, and safe sleep practices prior to working in the agency.
- Agencies shall keep records of substitute and practicum student hours worked and report them when requested to DHS.
- Volunteers cannot be counted to meet the adult: child ratios and shall never be left alone with children.

### **Criminal Background Checks**

- Criminal background checks are required for all staff at least every five (5) years.
- The following persons are required to have a background check no more than ninety (90) days before having access to any child care agency: any person who owns or operates a child care agency; any person who applies to work in a child care agency; any person who will provide substitute services to a child care agency for more than thirty-six (36) hours in a calendar year and who is counted in the adult:child ratio; and any person who is fifteen (15) years of age or older who will reside in a child care agency.
- A staff person, who has lived or worked in another state during the past 5 years, may begin work upon obtaining a conditional letter of approval allowing the applicant to work under supervision of another fully cleared applicant, until all of the results from other state(s) have been issued.

### **Records and Reporting**

- A record for each child shall be maintained within the child care agency.
- All records shall be maintained in an organized manner onsite, in a centralized location, or available electronically, and made readily available upon Department request.
- Written plan of action must be endorsed by a physician for a child with life threatening allergies.

- Parent must provide written consent for emergency medical care/treatment.
- Written statement must be on file that lists to whom the child shall be released
- Written transportation agreement between parent and the child care agency regarding daily transportation shall be on file.
- Daily attendance records that include the full name and time in time out for each child shall be maintained on site or in an electronically accessible format.
- The child care agency shall obtain individual permission slips signed and dated by the parent for each field trip prior to the activity.
- Each infant, toddler and preschool child shall have a written transition plan for moving from one age group to another.
- The records of any child who is five (5) years or older in an agency which lacks approved kindergarten status shall include a signed acknowledgment by the child's parents that recognizes that the child's attendance does not satisfy the mandatory kindergarten prerequisite for the child's enrollment in first grade.
- Children of homeless families, children in state custody, and asylees and refugees may receive care for up to sixty (60) days prior to providing documentation of immunizations and well-child examinations.

**Incident Reporting**

- Incidents, accidents, injuries and signs of illness shall be reported to the parent no later than the child's release on the date of occurrence and documented immediately with specific information; such information shall be provided to the parent the same day of the incident and filed in the child's record.
- The child care agency shall notify the Department of all serious incidents the same day of the incident by contacting the Complaint Hotline or submission via the parent portal.
- Serious incidents involving suspected child abuse or neglect must be reported to the Department of Children's Services.

**Duty to Report Child Abuse and Neglect**

- Every operator, owner, licensee, director, primary educator or staff member of, or substitute staff member or volunteer in, a child care agency licensed by the Department of Human Services is individually responsible and required to immediately report any reasonable suspicion of child abuse or neglect to either the Department of Children's Services and/or local law enforcement or the judge of the juvenile court in the county of the child's residence, pursuant to T.C.A. §§ 37-1-403 and 37-1-605.
- All child care agency staff shall receive training annually regarding proper procedures to report child abuse and neglect.

**Supervision**

- All areas of the building and grounds shall be visually inspected after closing for the day to ensure no children have been unintentionally left in any part of the facilities.
- Children shall be released to only the child's parent, or other person authorized by the parent in accordance with child care agency's policies.
- Child care agencies shall maintain a daily sign-in and sign-out sheet or electronic sign-in or sign-out record that includes each child's printed or typed full name, date, time of entry, time of departure and the name of the individual who brought the child and picked the child up.
- Educators providing supervision to children during meal and

snack times are prohibited from engaging in activities unrelated to mealtime while children are eating.

- Child care agencies shall develop, follow and post a written mealtime supervision plan.
- Child care agencies shall develop and follow a written playground supervision plan.
- Child care agencies shall develop and follow a written transition plan.
- Child care agencies shall develop and follow a written transition plan that includes name to face roll call for children.
- During field trips, the adult:child ratios shall be doubled, and attendance shall be checked prior to leaving the child care agency, upon arrival at each destination, at the beginning and end of each activity; upon departing each destination and upon arrival at the child care agency.
- For family and group homes the adult:child ratio shall be increased by one (1) during field trips.
- When children are engaged in activities in or near a body of water, the following requirements shall be met:

Age Group	Adult:Child Ratio
6 weeks–12 months	1:1
13 months – 35months	1:2
Three (3) years	1:3
Four (4) years	1:4
Five (5) years	1:5
School-age (Kindergarten and above)	1:10

- One (1) adult present shall have a current certificate in advanced aquatics lifesaving skills and shall supervise above the level of the swimmers.
- Safe sleep practices must be followed to prevent suffocation and deaths in infants:
  - ✓ Infants shall sleep in cribs or play yards with a firm sleep surface with a fitted sheet.
  - ✓ Infants shall not sleep on a sofa, soft mattress, adult bed, in a car seat, swing or other restraining devices.
  - ✓ Infants shall be positioned on their backs for sleeping
  - ✓ Bibs shall be removed prior to placing infants in a crib for sleeping.
  - ✓ Soft bedding, mobiles and other toys that attach to any part of the crib are prohibited.
  - ✓ Infants that arrive asleep in car seats or fall asleep in any piece of equipment other than a crib must be immediately removed and placed on their back in a crib.
  - ✓ Avoid letting the infant overheat and ensure infants are dressed appropriately for the environment (no greater than 1 layer more than an adult would wear in the same environment).
- Any practice that is an exception to the Department's safe sleep supervision procedures shall not be used without written authorization from a physician.
- If there is a sleeping or resting child during nighttime, there shall be at least one (1) adult educator awake and supervising.

**Health and Safety**

- Children shall be checked upon arrival each day for signs of illness and injury.
- The receiving educator shall document any obvious marks or injuries and shall note any comments from the parents pertaining to the marks or injuries.
- A child showing signs of illness shall be cared for apart from other children to the extent that supervision can be

maintained for all children, and the parent shall be contacted and arrangements made for pick up.

- At least one staff with certification in first aid and one certified in CPR shall be present on site at all times.
- A child diagnosed with a communicable disease shall have proof of treatment prior to readmission if necessary.
- Parents/guardians of every child enrolled shall be notified immediately if a diagnosed communicable disease has been identified in the agency.
- All medications shall be received from the parent by a designated staff person and administered by staff persons who have received training in medication administration.
- Unused medication shall be returned to the parent.
- Medication shall never be administered in bottles or infant feeders unless authorized by a physician.
- All medications shall be inaccessible to children unless a physician's authorization for the current school year is on file that allows a school-age child to have self-administered medication.
- Diaper cream, ointments, sunscreens and lotions shall be inaccessible to children.
- Smoking/vaping is not permitted in any indoor area or vehicle of the child care agency at any time.
- Smoking/vaping is not permitted on the playground or in any outdoor area accessible to children during the time children are present.
- The use of alcoholic beverages is not permitted in a child care agency during the hours of operation.
- Firearms shall not be on the premises of a child care agency, in any vehicle used to transport children or in the presence of a child unless carried by an armed security guard who meets all training and registration requirements and is posted at the agency.
- In a private residence, firearms shall be locked and unloaded with ammunition locked up separately.
- All items labeled "keep out of reach of children" shall be inaccessible to children.
- Personal belongings of residents and staff shall be inaccessible to children.
- Children's diapers shall be checked regularly throughout the day to determine if they are wet or soiled.
- Educators shall provide rich social interchanges and engaging eye contact during diapering.
- Educators shall utilize sanitary diapering procedures.
- Pre-school and school-age children requiring assistance with toileting, shall receive assistance in a location designated for that purpose which provides privacy.
- Child care agencies shall use U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)- registered products for cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting.
- Staff members with signs of a communicable disease shall not be present.

### **Food and Food Service**

- Educators and children shall wash their hands with soap and water.
- Children shall be seated at tables and chairs of appropriate size, and an educator shall be near any table or high chair where a child is eating.
- An infant shall be held while drinking from a bottle if the infant is too young to use a high chair.
- Educators shall ensure that infants have completed feeding and swallowed all milk/formula prior to being laid down.
- Bottles shall not be propped or given to a child while lying flat.

- Children shall not be permitted to carry a bottle with them throughout the day.
- Children shall not have food or drink while in beds, cots, cribs or on mats.
- In order to prevent injuries related to bottle warmers, crock pots and microwaves:
  - ✓ Crock pots are prohibited for use as bottle warmers.
  - ✓ Crock pots shall be kept in kitchen and inaccessible.
  - ✓ Microwave ovens and surrounding area, including cords, shall not be accessible to children.
  - ✓ School-age children shall use microwaves only under direct supervision.
- In order to prevent choking:
  - ✓ Solid foods, including cereal, shall not be given to children with normal eating abilities in bottles or infant feeders unless written authorization on file from doctor.
  - ✓ Food shall not be accessible/served until cut, chopped, diced, mashed for each child's age, chewing and swallowing ability.
  - ✓ Educators shall check to ensure that no food is left in the mouth of a child prior to placing down for sleep.
  - ✓ Educator is prohibited from performing classroom duties unrelated to food service during mealtime.
  - ✓ Children shall not wear teething necklaces, pacifiers, or any item around their neck or attached to their clothing.
- Breast milk/formula remaining in bottles after feeding shall be disposed of in accordance with timeframes recommended by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- Frozen breast milk shall be labeled with date expressed and name of child.
- Food, formula, milk or breast milk brought from home shall be labeled with the child's name; the date received and shall be refrigerated immediately.
- Previously opened baby food jars shall not be accepted in the child care agency.
- If food is fed directly from the jar by the educator, the jar shall be used for only one feeding and discarded.
- Food provided by the agency shall be in accordance with the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) nutritional guidelines.
- No sugar sweetened beverages shall be served to children at any time by the child care agency.
- Children shall be given adequate time to eat.
- Food shall not be used as a reward and should not be forced or withheld.
- Each child's food allergies shall be posted where food is prepared and served.
  - For a child with life threatening allergies, a written plan of action should be posted where the educator has immediate access.
- Agency shall make accommodations that support and facilitate a family's decision to continue breast feeding.
- Home preserved food and raw milk are prohibited.

### **Equipment for Children**

- Developmentally appropriate equipment and furnishings shall be available for each age group.
- All indoor and outdoor large and heavy equipment, appliances and furnishings shall be secured to prevent falling or tipping over.
- Electrical cords and cords on window blinds or curtains shall be inaccessible to children.
- Indoor equipment, materials, and toys shall be available to provide a variety of developmentally appropriate activities so that each child has at least two (2) choices during play time.

- In infant/toddler rooms, equipment and a safe space shall be provided for climbing, crawling, pulling up and exploring without the use of confining equipment.
- Trampolines are prohibited.
- Climbers, swings and other heavy equipment that could cause injury if toppled shall be securely anchored.
- Climbers and swings shall have a protective fall zone surface recognized by CPSC as a shock absorbing, resilient material.
- Portable equipment shall be securely anchored or rendered immobile if required by manufacturer.
- A quiet rest area and cots or mats shall be available for all children who want to rest or nap.
- For health and safety reasons each crib, cot, bed or mat shall be labeled to assure that each child naps on his/her own bedding.
- Cribs and play yards must comply with CPSC requirements.
- Mattresses and foam pads shall fit the crib without any gaps or spaces to prevent suffocation.
- A blanket or covering shall be available to each child sleeping on a mat.

### **Program, Language and Literacy Development**

- Every child should have an opportunity to participate in program activities.
- The educator(s) shall give individual attention to each child throughout the day.
- Upon arrival, infants and toddlers shall be removed from car seats immediately.
- Child shall never be left unattended in any restraining device and shall not be kept in any restraining device longer than fifteen (15) minutes, except when eating while in a high chair.
- The use of electronic media and other electronic devices is prohibited for children less than two (2) years of age.
- Programs, movies, computer games, and music with violent or adult content shall not be permitted in children's presence.
- Child care agencies shall inform parents in writing of any scheduled media program viewing.
- Other activity choices shall be available to children who do not wish to participate in media time.
- Children of all ages who are in care more than three (3) daylight hours shall have a daily opportunity for outdoor play.
- Weather permitting, infants shall be taken outside two to three times per day.
- Children shall be properly dressed, and the length of time outside adjusted according to weather and age of the child.
- During outdoor play educators shall be alert for signs of weather-related distress such as dehydration and frostbite.
- Children in care for six (6) hours or more shall have an opportunity for a reclining rest period.
- No child shall be forced to lie down/nap or stay on a cot/mat for an extended period.
  - Nap areas shall have adequate lighting to allow the educator to see each child with a quick glance and respond appropriately to the child's physical and emotional needs.
- If music is played in areas where children sleep, it should be soothing and soft enough so children can be heard.
- Potentially shaming, humiliating, frightening, verbally abusive, injurious discipline methods, and/or techniques that isolate children are prohibited.

- Discipline shall not be related to food, rest, or toileting.
- Food shall not be used or withheld as a form of discipline. Active play opportunities shall not be withheld from children who have misbehaved.
- Spanking and all types of corporal punishment are prohibited.
- Toilet learning shall be done in cooperation with parents, and communication with parents maintained during the process.
- Activities shall be intentionally planned based upon the developmental age of the child.
- Infants, less than six (6) months of age shall have direct supervised tummy time every day when they are awake.
- During floor time/tummy time, the floor shall be clean and safe.
- Infants should be placed on a firm, safe surface for tummy time, with no soft materials placed under or around the infant during tummy time.
- If the infant falls asleep during tummy time, educators shall immediately place the infant in a crib on their back and follow all safe sleep procedures.
- For ages three (3) through school-age, a personal safety curriculum shall be provided annually.
- For school-age children the curriculum shall include instruction on reporting physical, sexual or verbal abuse.
- Parents shall be consulted in developing a plan to meet the individual needs of a child with special needs.

### **Physical Facilities**

- All facilities shall annually pass an inspection verifying compliance with all applicable state and local fire and environmental requirements.
- At least one (1) working telephone shall be available at the agency and the telephone number made available to parents.
- Outdoor play areas shall contain a minimum of fifty (50) square feet of usable play space for each child using the area at one time.
- The outdoor play area shall be enclosed by fence or barrier at least four (4) feet in height.
- Pre-play inspection of outdoor play area shall be completed prior to each use.
- Sandboxes must be covered when not in use.
- Children shall not be present if an adequate water supply is not available.
- Children shall not be present if the sewage system is not operating.
- All rooms used by children shall be maintained at a temperature of between 68 to 78 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Children shall not be present if indoor temperature cannot be maintained between 68 to 78 degrees Fahrenheit.
- Unvented fuel burning heaters and portable heaters are prohibited.
- Swimming pools shall be made inaccessible to children by use of fences and locked gates.
- Swimming is prohibited in drop-in care.
- Swimming pools and/or wading pools shall not be used without prior approval by the Health Department.
- Animals shall be in good health and immunized; free of fleas/ticks; kept away from food storage/preparation areas and contained in a way that does not allow unsupervised access.
- Reptiles and amphibians shall not be kept as pets.

### **Transportation**

- Child care agencies shall not transport children without prior written approval by the Department.
- Agencies shall conduct vehicle emergency evacuation

drills quarterly.

- Use of cell phones and texting is prohibited while driving.
- Routine transportation is limited to forty-five (45) minutes each way (does not apply to field trips for school-agers).
- Agencies shall maintain documentation of daily inspections and necessary repairs
- The interior temperature of the vehicle shall be monitored during extreme weather to ensure child safety.
- An adult must be in the vehicle whenever a child is in the vehicle.
- A passenger log with the first and last name of each child shall be used to track the loading and unloading of children during transport.
- If the child was loaded from home, the parent or other authorized person will additionally sign the log indicating that the child was placed on the vehicle.
- The log shall be updated as children are released from the vehicle.
- When the child is released to a parent or other authorized person, that person must sign the log indicating the release of that child to them.
- Immediately upon unloading the last child the driver must walk through the vehicle to confirm that all the children are off the vehicle.
- A staff person designated as reviewer shall walk through the vehicle to confirm that all the children are off the vehicle. The reviewer shall have no other responsibilities during the walk through of the vehicle.
- Family and group homes with a single educator shall develop a Department approved alternative system for ensuring all children are off the vehicle.
- When children are transported to school, they shall be unloaded only at the location designated by the school and only at the time the school is officially open with staff present to receive them.
- Drivers must submit to an annual health examination and pass a drug screening test.
- Drivers and monitors shall hold current certification in CPR and First Aid.
- The following equipment shall be maintained in the vehicle and stored in a manner which is not readily accessible to children: fire extinguisher, emergency reflective triangles; first aid kit; seat-belt cutter or similar device manufactured and designed to immediately release the vehicle's child restraint system(s) in an emergency; blood borne pathogenic clean-up kit; and working flashlight.
- All vehicles utilized by a child care agency which are designed to carry ten (10) or more passengers shall conform to all Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards for school buses.
- All child care vehicles designed by the vehicle manufacturer to carry ten (10) or more passengers shall be inspected as required by the Department.
- Child passenger restraints must be used in accordance with state law and federal law.
- Signage that includes the agency name, phone number and the Department's toll-free Child Care Complaint phone number must be on child care vehicles.

**Emergency Preparedness**

- The agency, in consultation with appropriate local authorities and local emergency management, shall develop a written multi-hazard plan to protect children in the event of emergencies and shall train staff annually on the plan.
- All child care agencies shall also inform parents and

guardians of children attending the child care agency of the plan.

**Specific Requirements For Family Child Care Homes**

- Adult:Child ratios shall be maintained at all times.
- Licensed capacity shall not be exceeded.
- Family Child Care Home Ratios and Group Size Chart

Maximum Number of Children and Ages (Including children "related" to the primary educator under nine (9) years of age)	Educators Required
Seven (7) or fewer children; and no more than four (4) under two (2) years	1
Seven (7) or fewer children; and five (5) or more under two (2) years	2
More than seven (7) children; and no more than four (4) under two (2) years	2
More than seven (7) children; and five (5) or more under two (2) years	3

- A qualified educator shall be on site any time the primary educator is not on site during child care operating hours.
- The maximum number of children present inside a physical space shall be determined by minimum square footage requirements.
- If the number of children exceeds seven (7) at one time or care is provided in one room of the home, the area shall provide thirty (30) square feet per child of usable play space.

**Specific Requirements For Group Child Care Homes**

- Adult:Child ratios shall be maintained at all times.
- The maximum number of children present shall not exceed twelve (12). Exception: Three (3) additional school-age children may be in care before/after school, school holidays/snow days and during summer vacation.
- Group Home Ratio and Group Size Chart:

Number of Children	Ages of Children	Educators Required
Twelve (12) – Fifteen (15) (any number over twelve (12) must be school-age)	No more than twelve (12) children three (3) years of age or older	1
Twelve (12) – Fifteen (15) (any number over twelve (12) must be school-age)	Up to nine (9) children under three (3) years of age; and no more than four (4) present under two (2) years of age	2
Twelve (12) – Fifteen (15) (any number over twelve (12) must be school-age)	Ten (10) or more under three (3) years of age	3

- If school-age children are enrolled, a school-age program shall be provided.
- If four (4) or more infants/toddlers attend, they shall have a separate and distinct space and their own educator.

- When children are sleeping or resting, there shall be at least one (1) adult awake and supervising and adult to child ratios shall be maintained.
- Primary educators shall have a high school diploma or equivalent.
- Owners who are employed elsewhere shall ensure that the primary educator is always on-site.
- The primary educator shall not be employed at any other job during the hours of operation unless the Department has approved the primary educator's employment in a program sponsored or recognized by the Department.
- A qualified educator shall be on-site any time that the primary educator is not on-site during child care operating hours.
- A minimum of thirty (30) square feet of useable indoor play space shall be provided for each child.
- The maximum number of children who may be present inside a physical space shall be determined in accordance with the minimum square footage requirements.

seventeen (17) years)		
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- Ratio Chart first/last hour and one-half (½) of each day only:

Age of Children	Adult: Child Ratio	Maximum Group Size
2 ½ years – 5 years	1:11	20
3 years – 12 years	1:15	20
4 years – 12 years	1:20	20
Thirteen (13) – Seventeen (17) years	1:20	20

**Specific Requirements For Child Care Centers**

- Adult: child ratios must be maintained at all times.
- When more than twelve (12) children are present a second adult must be physically available on the premises.
- Child Care Ratio and Group Size Charts

Age of Children	Adult:Child Ratio	Maximum Group Size
6 weeks – 15 months	1:4	8
12 months – 30 months	1:6	12
Two (2) years	1:7	14
3 years	1:9	18
4 years	1:13	24
5 years	1:16	24
School-age (Kindergarten and above)	1:20	No max

Age of Children	Adult:Child Ratio	Maximum Group Size
Six (6) weeks – Thirty (30) months	1:5	10
Twelve (12) months – Thirty-Six (36) months	1:6	12
Two (2) – Four (4) years	1:8	16
Two and one-half (2½) – Three (3) years (Thirty (30) – Forty-seven (47) months)	1:9	18
Two (2) – Three (3) years	1:8	16
Two and one-half (2½) – Five (5) years	1:11	20
Two and one-half (2½) – Twelve (12) years	1:11	20
Three (3) – Four (4) years	1:12	24
Three (3) – Five (5) years	1:13	24
Four (4) - Five (5) years	1:16	24
Four (4) – Six (6) years	1:16	24
Five (5) – Twelve (12) years	1:20	No Max
Kindergarten through Fifth Grade (ages five (5) – eleven (11) years)	1:20	No Max
Sixth Grade through Twelfth Grade (ages eleven (11) –	1:20	No Max

- Each child must be on roll in a defined group and assigned to that group with a specific educator(s).
- Infants shall have a separate space and shall never be grouped with children older than thirty (30) months of age.
- Children shall not be promoted to a new group until required based upon the age and developmental needs of the child.
- Groups, excluding infants & toddlers, may be combined for short periods for a special activity no more than sixty (60) minutes per day as long as adult:child ratios are met.
- Each group shall have a designated classroom with enough space for the entire group.
- Child care centers shall provide written lesson plans for each group of children.
- When more than twelve (12) children in first grade and above are present, a separate educator, group, space and program shall be provided for them.
- The maximum number of children who may be present inside a physical space shall be determined in accordance with the minimum square footage requirements.
- A minimum of thirty (30) square feet of useable indoor play space shall be provided for each child.
- Each nap room shall contain a minimum of thirty (30) square feet of floor space per child.
- In an infant or toddler room with more than one educator, each educator shall be responsible for providing consistent care for a specific infant(s)/toddler(s) which includes but is not limited to: planning and record- keeping, communication, etc.
- Following the issuance of a license, a child care center may operate without an on-site director for a period of not more than sixty (60) days total within the licensing year.

**Specific Requirements For Drop-In Child Care Centers**

- Before accepting a child for care, the parent shall provide a statement regarding the estimated amount of time that the parent anticipates that the child will be in attendance.
- The child care agency shall familiarize staff with personal safety material and be prepared to discuss them with parents.
- The drop-in center shall have an on-site director and the director shall be at least twenty-one (21) years of age.
- The director shall have earned a high school diploma or its equivalent and one (1) year of full-time work experience with children in a group setting.
- Each educator who is used to meet the minimum required adult:child ratio shall have a high school diploma.
- Children shall be placed in age appropriate groups and with adequate adult educator supervision:

Age Grouping:	
Age of Children	Adult:Child Ratio
Six (6) weeks –Fifteen (15) months	1:4
Twelve (12) months – Thirty (30) month	1:7
Two (2) years	1:9
Three (3) years	1:12
Four (4) years	1:15
Five (5) years (not in Kindergarten)	1:18
School-age (Kindergarten and above)	1:22

- The adult:child ratio for a multi-age group containing infants:

Majority Age of Children Present	One Infant	Two Infants
12 months – 30 months	1:7	1:6
2 years	1:9	1:6
3 years	1:8	1:7
4 years	1:10	1:9
5 years (not in Kindergarten)	1:18	1:13
School-age (Kindergarten and above)	1:22	1:15

- If food is provided by the agency, it shall meet the USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program nutritional guidelines.
- The maximum number of children who may be present inside a physical space shall be determined in accordance with the minimum square footage requirements.
- A minimum of thirty (30) square feet of useable indoor play space shall be provided for each child.
- Each nap room shall contain a minimum of thirty (30) square feet of floor space per child.
- Staff shall have documentation of all children's allergies and how to deal with any allergic reaction.
- Staff shall review emergency preparedness and fire procedures and shall physically walk through the evacuation process every quarter.
- Prohibited activities include swimming, transportation and the provision of specialized services.

Tennessee Department of Human Services  
 ChildCare Services website is located here:  
[Child Care Services \(tn.gov\)](http://www.tn.gov/childcare)

A wealth of child care information can be found on the Department's website.

You can:

- ✓ Learn more about the rules
  - ✓ Learn more about the types of regulated care
  - ✓ Locate a child care provider
  - ✓ Learn more about the Quality Rating and Improvement System (formerly Report Card and Star Quality Program)
  - ✓ Locate the local child care licensing office
  - ✓ Review the current personal safety curriculum
  - ✓ Read about new initiatives in child care
  - ✓ Locate the nearest child care certificate office
  - ✓ Find info on choosing child care
  - ✓ Locate a child care resource and referral center
- And much more!

**Child Care Resource and Referral Centers**

The Tennessee Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network has 9 CCR&R sites located across the state. Each CCR&R employs a team of highly qualified coaches who provide training and coaching to DHS licensed child care educators in their area. CCR&Rs also provide valuable resources to parents looking for quality child care. For more information visit the Child Care Services website or [tnccrr.org](http://tnccrr.org)

**kidcentral TN**

Information about child health, education, and development as well as available state services can be found at: <https://www.kidcentraltn.com/>

**Department of Children's Services Hotline**

Report Child Abuse or Neglect  
 1-877-237-0004

**Child Care Complaint Hotline**

Nashville Area: (615) 313-4820  
 Toll Free: 1-800-462-8261

If you have a concern about an existing child care agency or wish to report an illegal operation, call the Department's complaint hotline.