

**SUMMARY OF  
LICENSING  
STANDARDS  
FOR  
DAY CARE HOMES**



**DCFS**

Illinois Department of  
Children and Family Services

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# SUMMARY OF LICENSING STANDARDS FOR DAY CARE HOMES

## Introduction

Family homes in which care is provided for more than three children, including the caregiver's own children, related and unrelated children, must be licensed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). No day care home operator may care for more than a total of 12 children, including the caregiver's own children under age 12.

The day care home license must be posted. It will list the caregiver's name, how many children may be cared for in the home, the areas of the home that may be used for child care and whether night care can also be provided. When a day care home is licensed, it means that a DCFS or licensed child welfare agency licensing representative has inspected the facility and the facility was found to meet the licensing requirements. A license is valid for three years. Licensed day care homes are inspected annually by DCFS or the supervising licensed child welfare agency. If a complaint has been received regarding a violation of the licensing standards of a day care home, a licensing representative will conduct a licensing complaint investigation to determine if the alleged violation should be substantiated or unsubstantiated. Substantiated violations are reported to individuals who call the Day Care Information Line. Substantiated violations must be posted in a prominent area of the home until corrected.

## 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 p.m.

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## **Summary of Licensing Standards for Day Care Homes**

The following summary of the licensing standards for day care homes 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 home. State licensing standards are *minimum* standards. If you notice a violation of any of these standards, you are encouraged to discuss your concerns with the day care home provider. In most cases, parents and caregivers are able to resolve parents' concerns. If you believe the caregiver 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. A DCFS licensing representative will investigate your complaint and report the results back to you.

## **Caregivers, Assistants and Family Members**

- The caregiver must be at least 18 years old and have a high school diploma or equivalent.
  - Caregivers licensed to care for newborns and infants must received training on sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), sudden unexpected infant death (SUID) and safe sleep;
  - Assistants must be at least 14 years old and five years older than the oldest child they supervise.
  - Caregivers, assistants and all members of a caregiver's family must provide medical reports that they are free of reportable communicable disease.
  - The caregiver, assistants and all other adult members of the household are subject to background checks for any record of criminal conviction or child abuse and neglect. A caregiver's children age 13 and older are subject to abuse and neglect background checks.
  - A person certified in first aid, including CPR and the Heimlich maneuver, must be present at all times.
  - The caregiver may not be employed outside the home during the hours that child care is being provided.
  - Caregivers must have 15 hours of in-service training per year.
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- Assistants under age 18 must work under the direct personal supervision of the caregiver at all times.
  - Assistants 18 years of age or older may accompany children playing outdoors, and may transport children, if the assistant possesses a valid driver's license and insurance.
  - A substitute caregiver may be used in the home up to 25 hours per month and for an additional period of up to two weeks in a 12-month period.
  - The caregiver must have a plan which has been discussed with parents regarding child care services if/when the caregiver is ill or absent from the home during day care hours.

## **Requirements for the Home**

- The home must have a first-aid kit.
  - The kitchen must have an operable fire extinguisher and a flashlight in working order.
  - Electrical outlets within reach of young children must have protective coverings.
  - There must be an operating smoke detector in every room where children nap or sleep, including basements and occupied attics.
  - Fixed space heaters, fireplaces, radiators and other heating sources in areas occupied by children must be separated by partitions or a sturdy barrier to prevent contact.
  - A basement may only be used for child care if the license lists the basement as an area where care can be provided. The basement must have two exits. At least one must exit directly to the outside at ground level.
  - First-aid supplies, medication, cleaning materials, poisons, tools, gardening equipment and other hazardous materials must be stored in places inaccessible to children.
  - Handguns are prohibited on the premises except in the possession of peace officers or other adults who must possess a handgun as a condition of employment and who reside in the day care home.
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- Any other firearm must be kept disassembled, without ammunition, in a locked storage facility inaccessible to children. Ammunition must be kept locked in storage separate from the firearm.
  - The operator of the home must notify parents or guardians that firearms and ammunition are stored on the premises.
  - There must be written plans for evacuation in case of emergency. Fire and tornado drills must be conducted monthly.
  - Exit doors must be kept clear of equipment and debris at all times.
  - There must be an operable telephone available on the premises.
  - All swimming pools located in areas accessible to children must be fenced and secured with a locked gate.
  - Hot and cold running water must be provided.
  - Water temperature must be no higher than 115°F at faucets for children's hand washing sinks.
  - Healthy household pets, which present no danger to children, are permitted. Dogs and cats must be inoculated for rabies.
  - Wild and dangerous animals as well as monkeys, ferrets, turtles, iguanas and birds of the parrot family must not be accessible to children during child care operation hours.
  - No person may smoke tobacco in any area of the day care home in which day care services are being provided to children while those children are present on the premises. No person may smoke tobacco while providing transportation to children receiving day care services.
  - There must be safe outdoor space for active play in yards, nearby parks or playgrounds. Supervision must be provided during outdoor play at all times.
  - Hot tubs must have locked covers or be inaccessible to children.
  - Free-hanging cords on blinds, shades and drapes must be tied or kept out of reach of children.
  - Only new cribs manufactured on or after June 28, 2011 must be in place.
  - The home must have been tested for radon within the last three years. The test results must be posted in an area visible to parents.
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## Admission and Discharge

- Parents must be provided a certified copy of the child's birth certificate when enrolled for the first time (the original certificate will be returned to the parent within 24 hours).
- No child served shall remain on the premises for more than 12 hours in any 24-hour period.
- A child shall be discharged from the day care home only to the child's parents or guardian or person designated by the parents/guardian.

## Number and Ages of Children Served

A caregiver alone may care for:

- Up to a total of eight children under 12 years of age, with no more than five under five years and no more than three under 24 months; *or*
- Up to a total of eight children under 12 years of age, with no more than six under five years and no more than two under 30 months; *or*
- A school age group consisting of eight school age children.
- An additional four school-age children may be cared for with a part-time assistant.

A caregiver and full-time assistant may care for:

- Up to a total of eight children under five years of age, with no more than five under 24 months.
- If the assistant is 18 years of age or older, an additional four school-age children may receive care.
- With extended capacity written approval the caregiver's own school age children may be counted in the additional four children when there is a qualified assistant present in the home during the day.

## Health

- A medical report indicating that the child has been appropriately immunized must be on file for each child. Parents are encouraged to stay informed about childhood immunizations by visiting: [http://www.state.il.us/dcf/daycare/Childhood\\_Immunizations.shtml](http://www.state.il.us/dcf/daycare/Childhood_Immunizations.shtml).
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A tuberculin skin test is to be included in the initial exam unless waived by a physician.

- For infants and preschool children, the medical report is valid for two years. Subsequent examinations for school-age children must be in accordance with the requirements of the public schools. Children from six months to six years of age must have either a lead risk assessment or a lead screening.
- Prescription and non-prescription medication may be administered. The caregiver must maintain a record of the dates, hours and dosages given.
- Each child must have a bed, cot, crib or playpen with individual bedding. A twin size bed may be used for two children under age four, provided each child has individual sheets.
- Caregivers and children must wash hands before meals, after toileting, and after contact with respiratory secretions.
- There must be an emergency plan for each child in case of accident or sudden illness.

## Program

- There must be a balance of active and quiet play. There must be activities, both indoors and outdoors, to make use of both large and small muscles.
  - Children must not be left unattended. Supervision must be provided at all times.
  - Simple play equipment, suitable to the age and developmental needs of the children, must be available for use indoors and outdoors.
  - Parents or guardians must be permitted to visit the home, without prior notice, during the hours their children are in care.
  - The following are prohibited:
    - physical punishment, shaming, frightening or humiliating
    - verbal abuse, threats or derogatory remarks about the child or the child's family
    - depriving a child of a meal
    - punishment for toilet accidents
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- Removal of a child from the group to “time-out” is permitted for children two years old or older, however, the amount of time, in minutes, must not exceed the child’s age in years.
  - The day care home cannot be licensed to provide care for more than 18 hours in a 24-hour period.
  - Children may be released only to their parents or guardians or to persons designated in writing by the parent or guardian.
  - Day care homes must have a written policy explaining to the parents and guardians what actions the caregiver will take when children are not picked up at the agreed time.
  - All children must be directly supervised at all times when children are wading or swimming. A second adult must be available to supervise any children not swimming.

### **School-Age Children**

- A snack must be served when children arrive after school.
- Children who come to the home from school for lunch must be served a nutritionally balanced meal.

### **Children Under 30 Months of Age**

- Children must not be permitted in bathrooms, kitchens or other hazardous areas without the caregiver or assistant present.
  - Non-mobile children who are awake must be moved to different positions and must be held, rocked and carried about.
  - Children must be taken outdoors for a portion of every day, weather permitting.
  - Children who cannot turn over alone must be placed on their backs or sides.
  - Children up to six months of age must be held while being bottle-fed. Bottles must not be propped.
  - Hands must be washed before the feeding of each child.
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- Foods stored or prepared in jars must be served from a separate dish for each child. Leftovers from the serving dish must be discarded.
  - Persons changing diapers must wash their hands and the child's hands under running water with soap after each change of diaper. Disposable, non-permeable gloves must be worn when changing a child who has watery or bloody stools.
  - Safe, sturdy, well-constructed individual cribs, playpens or port-a-cribs for infants must be equipped with good, firm, fitting mattresses made of waterproof materials. Washable cots may be used for children 15 months of age and older.
  - Equipment and play materials must be durable and free from characteristics that may be hazardous or injurious to children, including: sharp, rough edges; toxic paint and objects small enough to be swallowed.

## **Night Care**

- The child must be bathed, if needed. No child under five years of age is to be left unattended while in the bathtub.
- A bed, crib or cot and individual linen and bedding must be provided for each child. A double bed must be the minimum size for sleeping two children of the same sex.
- An evening meal that meets nutritional requirements must be served at a regular time each evening. A bedtime snack must be served.
- Children who remain overnight and go to school directly from the home must have breakfast, including juice or fruit, unless they are receiving breakfast at school.
- The caregiver must sleep on the same floor in which children sleep and be within hearing distance of the children in care.

## **Nutrition and Meals**

- Food requirements for children between birth and the age of eating table food must be geared to the individual needs of the child and determined in consultation with the parents. The facility must provide
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one-third to two-thirds of the daily nutritional requirements, depending on the length and time of day of the child's stay.

- Parents may provide meals and snacks for children if there is a signed agreement with the caregiver.
- Children in attendance for over 10 hours must be provided two meals and two snacks.

## **Transportation**

- Children may be transported only by persons 18 years of age or older.
- Each child must be individually fastened into a suitable infant or child restraint device that is federally approved.
- No child may be left unattended in a vehicle.

## **Records and Reports**

- Suspected child abuse and/or neglect must be reported to the department immediately.
- The caregiver must respect the confidential nature of the child and family records.
- There must be signed consent forms from the parent or guardian including: permission for emergency medical care; permission to administer medication, if applicable; permission for someone other than parent or guardian to pick up child if necessary; visits, trips or excursions off the premises; transportation provided by caregiver and permission to use the swimming pool, if applicable.

*This summary has been developed to assist parents in monitoring the care provided by the day care home. Licensing Standards for Day Care Homes may be accessed through the DCFS website: [DCFS.illinois.gov](https://www.dcf.gov). You may also contact your nearest DCFS office for assistance. Locations of DCFS offices are also available on the DCFS website.*

State of Illinois  
Illinois Department of Children and Family Services

**VERIFICATION OF RECEIPT**

I/WE, \_\_\_\_\_  
Please Print Name(s)

parent(s) of \_\_\_\_\_, hereby certify that I/we have  
Name(s) of Child(ren)

received a copy of a summary of licensing standards printed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent Date

**THIS COMPLETED FORM IS TO BE PLACED IN EACH CHILD'S FILE AT THE DAY CARE FACILITY.**

