



# Opening a Child Care Program

Licensing considerations when starting a child care program in North Dakota.

## Unlicensed Child Care Types

### **Self-Declared Providers:**

Individuals may care for 5 or fewer children or 3 children under 24 months in a home. Self-Declared providers must meet some minimal standards including a background check, basic health and safety training, and are inspected prior to approval.

### **Approved Relatives:**

Individuals may care for 5 or fewer children or 3 children under 24 months in a home. The approved relatives must be related by marriage, blood relationship or court order and include grandparents, great-grandparents, aunts, and uncles. A sibling who is age 18 or older and who does not live in the same home as the children for whom care is being provided, can also become an approved relative.

## Licensed Child Care Types

### **Licensed Family Child Care:**

Family providers may care for up to 7 children with no more than 3 who are under the age of 24 months, plus two additional school-age children.

### **Licensed Group Child Care:**

Group child care programs may be licensed in a home or a facility. Groups may be licensed for up to 30 children, with the actual license capacity determined by available space, staff to child ratios, and sometimes local ordinances.

### **Licensed Child Care Center:**

Child care centers are licensed for at least 19 children in a facility with the actual license capacity determined by available space, staff to child ratios, and sometimes local ordinances.

### **Licensed Preschools:**

DHS preschools provide education and socialization experiences for children age 2 years to kindergarten and may operate sessions for no more than 3 hours per day.

### **Licensed School-Age Programs:**

School-age programs are licensed for at least 19 children in a facility, with the actual license capacity determined by available space, staff to child ratio, and sometimes local ordinances. School-age programs offer services before and after school and sometimes on school holidays and through the summer months.

## Who Needs to Be Licensed?

North Dakota State law states that any child care provider caring for more than three children (under the age of 24 mo.) or six or more children (of mixed ages) must be licensed.

Any child care provider found in violation of these limits is operating against the law and may be charged with a Class B Misdemeanor.

## How to Obtain a Child Care License

Anyone interested in obtaining a child care license should contact an Early Childhood Licensing Specialist. Use this link to find one serving your specific county: <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childcare/docs/nd-ecs-map.pdf>

## Child Care Rules & Regulations

The Early Childhood Services division of the North Dakota Department of Human Services oversees the regulation of child care programs in the state. Learn more by visiting: <http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/childcare/info/>



## Additional Resources

**Bright and Early ND** | [www.brightnd.org](http://www.brightnd.org)

**Growing Futures** | [www.ndgrowingfutures.org](http://www.ndgrowingfutures.org)

**North Dakota Child Care Assistance**  
<http://www.nd.gov/dhs/services/financialhelp/childcare.html>

**Child & Adult Food Program**  
<https://www.nd.gov/dpi/districtschools/child-nutrition-and-food-distribution/child-adult-care-food-program>

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## Start-Up Support for Your New Child Care Business

If you are thinking about starting a child care business or you are newly licensed, you can receive customized onsite and/or virtual visits from Child Care Aware® consultants to learn about business essentials, creating safe and healthy environments, and marketing your program.

Child Care Aware offers a variety of consultation and support for providers. This includes start up support; health and safety matters; caring for children with special needs or challenging behaviors; and offers training and professional development, plus markets your program to families looking for child care.



[www.ndchildcare.org](http://www.ndchildcare.org)  
1-800-997-8515

