

Procedure for Obtaining An Initial License to Operate a Day Camp for Children

Under s. 48.65, Wis. Stats., programs that provide care and supervision for 4 or more children under 7 years of age for less than 24 hours a day are required to be licensed through the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Chapter DCF 252 governs seasonal programs oriented in the out-of-doors that provide care and supervision for 4 or more children 3 years of age and older.

Please read through all licensing requirements below BEFORE you begin the application process.

We strongly encourage all resources be accessed electronically. If you obtained a printed version of this inquiry packet and would like to access these resources online, please visit the department's website at <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/index.php/cclicensing/startcc>. If you cannot obtain forms or publications online that are not already included in this packet, please contact the Child Care Information Center at 1-800-362-7353.

PREPARATION

- Determine if you are eligible to operate a Day Camp before beginning the application process.**
 - See the Potential Barriers to Obtaining a Child Care Center License ([English](#) / [Spanish](#)) document and [DCF 252.05](#) for basic eligibility requirements for operating a day camp.
 - Minimum eligibility requirements include a discussion of any existing records for the following:
 - Tax delinquency
 - Unemployment insurance contribution delinquency
 - Criminal background checks – check the list of [Barred Offenses for Regulated Child Care](#)
- Determine the community needs for your program of interest.**
 - Gather feedback from community members and local agencies.
- Study the Licensing rule book for Day Camps for Children for details and resources.**
 - Read the [DCF 252 Licensing Rules for Day Camps for Children with Commentary](#) on the DCF website.
 - If you cannot access this online resource, you may contact our Northern Regional Office at (715) 361-7700 for a printed copy of the licensing rules.
 - Review the [Initial Licensing Checklist – Day Camps](#) to understand the initial licensing requirements.

PHYSICAL PREMISES

- Ensure that any buildings or shelters meet the Wisconsin Commercial Building Codes and other applicable licensing regulations.**
 - Conduct a building inspection. See [DCF 252.43 \(1\)](#) for details about inspection report requirements. If you are purchasing a previously regulated day camp, you must complete a new building inspection.
 - See [DCF 252.43](#) for building and shelter requirements for a licensed day camp facility.
 - If your building is not served by a public water system, request a well inspection and water test for lead and bacteria. See [DCF 252.43 \(4\)](#) for details about water system requirements. For more information regarding water tests, visit the [Department of Natural Resources website](#).
- Install a vehicle safety alarm that prompts the driver to check for children prior to exiting the vehicle.**
 - Required for vehicles that are owned, leased, or contracted and has a seating capacity of 6 or more passengers (including the driver). See [DCF 252.09 \(8\)](#).
 - Additional information on vehicle safety alarms is available on the department's [Information for Providers](#) webpage (Vehicles), including a computer-based training video.
- Obtain all required liability insurance for the premises.**
 - Liability insurances might also include vehicles or animals; see [DCF 252.41 \(1\) \(e\)](#) and [252.44 \(11\)](#) for more details.
- Obtain appropriate equipment for your day camp space.**
 - A list of resources and suggested equipment, including the latest news & recalls, is available from the Child Care Information Center's [Resource Materials webpage](#).

BUSINESS MODEL

- Prepare a business plan including start-up and operating budgets.**
 - Include costs for the necessary permits and operation of your program's building/location.
 - Check with your municipality or local zoning authorities about all needs for a conditional use permit or building plan reviews for any modifications to the building.
 - Review [DCF 252.43](#) for physical premises and building requirements and determine whether you need to make any changes to the building prior to obtaining a license.
- Decide on a legal structure for the business.**
 - Examples: sole proprietorship, cooperative, limited liability company, partnership, corporation, etc.
 - Will it be for profit? Not for profit?
 - Who is financially and legally responsible?
- Develop policies and procedures for your program.**
 - Review the [Policy Checklist – Day Camps](#) for required and strongly recommended topics to include.
 - The policies and procedures should be detailed for both staff and families to reference.
 - A written contract between the center and parents is recommended.
- Develop pre-camp training plans.**
 - For all counselors and volunteers counted in counselor-to-child ratios, include all content listed in [DCF 252.42 \(3\) \(a\) and \(b\)](#).
 - For volunteers who are not counted in counselor-to-child ratios, include content as specified in [DCF 252.42 \(3\) \(c\)](#).
 - For all persons transporting children, include all items listed in [DCF 252.09 \(4\) \(b\)](#).
- Consider participating in [Wisconsin Shares](#), Wisconsin's child care subsidy program, and [YoungStar](#), Wisconsin's child care quality rating and improvement system.**
- Contact the [Internal Revenue Service \(IRS\)](#) to obtain a Federal Tax Identification Number (FEIN) for your business.**
- Check with a lawyer, accountant, and/or governmental agency to determine any obligations regarding income tax withholding, social security contributions, worker's compensation, and unemployment compensation.**

STAFFING & ADMINISTRATION

- All staff must meet minimum educational requirements for day camps.**
 - See [DCF 252.42](#) for educational requirements.
 - Visit [Child Care Regulation Information for Providers](#) webpage for training resources, including a licensed day camp computer-based training.
- Complete all required background checks for employees and residents.**
 - Any person (10 years and older) who works with children or resides at the camp will need to complete a Background Check Request (BCR) form ([English](#) / [Hmong](#) / [Spanish](#)).
 - Adults (18 years and older) are also required to complete a fingerprint-based check in addition to the standard name-based background check.
 - Individuals can submit a Background Check Request through the [iChildCare Portal](#) prior to submitting their license application. However, keep in mind that an individual only has 180 days to become active at a regulated child care program in order to maintain eligibility; if that time passes without the initial license being granted, a new background check (with the fee) will need to be completed.
 - Final eligibility must be received for the owner/applicant/licensee and the administrator or director who can supervise staff before a license may be granted.
 - Visit the [Child Care Background Unit \(CBU\) webpage](#) and the [DCF Background Check Checklist](#) for all background check requirements and details or contact the CBU at (608) 422-7400 for questions.
- Obtain any forms needed for the children's and staff's files.**
 - See [Required Items for Day Camps for Children](#) in Appendix D Resources List of the DCF 252 Commentary Manual.
 - Visit the department's [Child Care Licensing Forms and Publications](#) website for copies of the required and optional forms to complete.

SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION

Submit the required items to the regional office serving your area in order to become licensed.

- Complete the [Expression of Interest \(EOI\)](#).
 - Note: This is not the official application for a license – the application will be made available after completing the EOI.
- Some items to submit with the Initial License Application – Day Camps for Children include:
 - [Initial Licensing Checklist – Day Camps for Children](#). Complete and sign the Applicant section of the Initial Licensing Checklist not more than 30 days prior to submitting it with the application form.
 - Background Check Request forms for the licensee(s), and for persons aged 10 years or older residing in the center, (these can also be submitted through [iChildCare](#) within the 180 days prior to being granted a license).
 - Required certificates of insurance.
 - Center policies and a completed [Policy Checklist – Day Camps](#).
 - Building inspection report, if applicable, which indicates the building and/or shelter complies with all applicable Commercial Building Codes.
 - General description of the camp area, geographic location and size of the base camp, as well as the proposed itinerary of field trips if a program will consist primarily of field trips.
 - Licensed capacity, using the formula below:
_____ Total number of children under 7 years of age who are cared for in groups that are separate from the groups containing children 7 years of age and older.
+ _____ Total number of children in all the mixed age groups that have children under 7 years of age grouped with children 7 years of age and older. Note: All children in the mixed age group are counted in the licensed capacity.
+ _____ Total number of children 7 years of age and older (to be included in the licensed capacity in order to be eligible to receive child care subsidy payments) who are cared for in groups that are separate from the groups containing children under 7 years of age. Note: See Item No. 1 above for information regarding subsidy payments.
= _____ Total licensed capacity of the camp.

- Six-month probationary licensing fee. Below is a breakdown of the fee calculations.
 - Total 2-year fee = \$30.25 base fee + (\$16.94 per child in licensed capacity determined above).
 - Probationary fee = $\frac{1}{4}$ of the total 2-year fee.
- Any other materials indicated on the last page of the *Initial Licensing Checklist – Day Camps* or *Initial License Application*.
- Note: Any missing application items may prolong the application process.

Complete the initial on-site visit.

- Your regional licensing specialist will contact you to schedule the visit after submitting your application.
- Ensure at least 60 working days after the submission of application materials as a projected opening date to allow for a completed licensing review.

The Department of Children and Families is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access services, receive information in an alternate format, or need information translated to another language, please contact the Bureau of Early Care Regulation at dcfclicreg@wisconsin.gov or (608) 421-7550. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or speech disabled can use the free Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) – 711 to contact the department.