PROCEDURE FOR OBTAINING
AN INITIAL LICENSE TO OPERATE A DAY CAMP FOR CHILDREN

Thank you for your inquiry regarding the licensing of day camps for children. Under s. 48.65, Wis. Stats., seasonal day camp programs that care for 4 or more children under the age of 7 are required to be licensed through the Department of Children and Families (DCF). DCF 252 Licensing Rules for Day Camps for Children governs seasonal programs oriented in the out-of-doors that provide care and supervision for 4 or more children ages 3 years and older. Day camps that care for 3 or fewer children under age 7 are not required to be licensed.

1. **Child care subsidy payments:** Programs that want to be eligible for child care subsidy payments must be regulated. There are two types of regulation: licensing and certification. Programs that are not required to be licensed, but are required to be regulated in order to be eligible for child care subsidy payments, have several options. They may choose to license the entire camp or they may request school-age certification from the county in which the camp is located. Programs may also choose a combination of the two types of regulation and license the portion of the program that provides care for children under age 7 or children in mixed-age groups and certify the portion of the camp that cares for children over age 7. Please contact your regional licensing office if you have any questions (see enclosed listing).

2. Determine the need for the program you are considering. Involve other agencies and members of your community. Use the information you gather to decide what kind of program you will offer. Contact your local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency for detailed information for your area (see enclosed listing).

3. Read and study all enclosed materials, including the **DCF 252 Licensing Rules for Day Camps for Children**.

4. Decide on a legal structure for the business — sole proprietorship, partnership, or corporation. Is it “for-profit” or “not-for-profit”? Determine who is financially and legally responsible.

5. Prepare a business plan including start-up and operating budgets. Add any costs to apply for necessary permits including those related to meeting applicable regulations (see Nos. 6 and 8). Select a site and determine the related costs.

6. Check with your municipality regarding any zoning requirements that may affect where the day camp will be located. The local zoning authority can help explain the procedure for obtaining a conditional use permit if necessary. Obtain any other necessary permits.

7. Contact the Internal Revenue Service to obtain a Federal Tax Identification number (FEIN) which must be included on the application for licensure.

8. If your facility is not served by a public water system, request a well inspection and water test for bacteria and lead by a laboratory certified under ch. ATCP 77. **Note:** Camps using a private well that serves at least 25 of the same people over 6 months of the year are considered to have a non-transient non-community water system (NTNC) and must be in compliance with Administrative Code NR 809, Safe Drinking Water Act Standards. For information, visit the Department of Natural Resources web site [http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/DrinkingWater/owneroperator.html](http://dnr.wi.gov/topic/DrinkingWater/owneroperator.html).

9. Arrange necessary liability insurance for the premises and appropriate auto insurance if you plan to transport children in owned or non-owned vehicles. A certificate of insurance or insurance binder will need to be submitted with the application.

10. 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.

11. Obtain any forms needed for the children’s or the staff’s files. The department has developed forms that meet the requirements of the rules. Copies are available on the department’s website at [https://www.dcf.wisconsin.gov/cclicensing/ccformspubs](https://www.dcf.wisconsin.gov/cclicensing/ccformspubs). If you don’t have access to the Internet, contact your regional office for information on how to get one copy of each form by mail.
12. Develop policies and procedures for your program in the following areas:
   • Admission, including the procedure to contact a parent if the child is absent from the camp without prior notification from the parent.
   • Child guidance including ways to manage crying, fussing or distraught children.
   • Discharge of enrolled children.
   • Fee payments and refunds.
   • Health care, including procedures to be followed when there is contact with animals.
   • Nutrition.
   • Personnel, including job descriptions, hours of work, lunch and break times, holidays, vacations, sick leave, leaves of absence, probationary periods, performance evaluations, grievance procedures, and the disciplinary process. The policy shall also contain a procedure requiring staff to notify the licensee and the licensee to notify the department as soon as possible but no later than the next working day when the employee has been convicted of a crime; has been or is being investigated by any governmental agency; has a substantiated governmental finding of abuse or neglect of a child or adult or of misappropriation of a client’s property; or when a professional license has been denied, revoked, restricted or otherwise limited.
   • Program objectives, including a description of activities designed to carry out the program objectives.
   • Plans to be followed in the event of a fire, tornado, missing child, or other emergency. If an open-sided shelter is used as a base camp, the plan shall identify the location of a designated tornado shelter and the procedure to ensure the camp receives information about tornado watches or warnings. The plan shall include a procedure to ensure that children reach the tornado shelter in a timely fashion.
   • The plan for providing pre-camp training to staff.
   • The plan for supervising children during water activities and waterfront activities, including emergency procedures to be carried out if a child participating in water activities cannot be found.
   • Transportation if children may be transported to and from the camp or for field trips. The policy shall include a procedure to ensure that no child has been left unattended in a vehicle.

A written contract between the camp and the parent is recommended. Policies and procedures should be detailed and written so staff will know what your expectations are. Some policies and procedures, such as admission requirements, tuition and fee payments, nutrition, health care, child guidance and program objectives, may be incorporated into a parent handbook that is shared with parents upon enrollment.

13. Prior to initial licensure, the department will complete a child care background check on all applicants for licensure, employees, adult household members, and minor household members aged 10 through 17. Minor household members age 10 through 17 are subject to child abuse and neglect checks only, but may, in some instances, be subject to a criminal background check. You and your household members must complete all required components of the background check, including a fingerprint-based check, and receive final eligibility before a license may be granted. Additional information about the background check requirements can be found on the department’s website at https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/ccbgcheck or by contacting the Caregiver Background Unit (CBU) at (608) 422-7400.

14. Submit the following items to the regional office serving your area (see enclosed listing) in order to become licensed:
   • Completed Initial License Application – Day Camps for Children, DCF-F-CFS782.
   • Completed Licensing Checklist – Day Camps for Children, DCF-F-CFS70.
   • Completed Policy Checklist – Day Camps, DCF-F-2409.
   • Licensing fee (see Nos. 17 and 18 below).
   • Camp policies.
   • Completed Background Check Request (BCR) forms for the applicant (the applicant is the owner of a sole proprietorship, all partners in a partnership, or the president / board chairperson of a corporation); for persons aged 10 years and older living at the camp; and for persons aged 10 and older who are compensated to provide care to children enrolled in the camp.
   • Certificate of insurance for general liability insurance coverage and vehicle liability insurance if transportation is provided by the center. The certificate of insurance must include non-owned vehicle liability insurance if children will be transported in vehicles not owned by the licensee.
   • Articles of Incorporation and by-laws if the camp is organized as a corporation, association or cooperative.
   • A written delegation of administrative authority signed by applicant. It shall describe the organizational structure of the camp and identify by position or name those persons on the premises in charge of the camp for all hours of operation.
   • A water test that demonstrates the water has been found to be safe for drinking and, if applicable, swimming.
   • The name, address and telephone number of the person to be contacted by the licensing representative for the camp licensing review.
   • Building inspection report if applicable.
   • Directions for locating the camp area.
   • General description of the camp area, geographic location and size of the base camp or the proposed itinerary of field trips if a program will consist primarily of field trips.
15. **Allow at least 60 working days after the submission of all application materials (including fees) as a projected opening date to allow for a complete review by your licensing specialist.**

To avoid unnecessary delays in the licensing process, it is **VERY IMPORTANT** that you have met all applicable items in DCF 252 Licensing Rules for Day Camps for Children before the application is submitted and the initial site visit is scheduled with the department. **If the licensing specialist makes a visit and you are not in compliance with all applicable requirements of DCF 252, your application for a license may be denied because you did not meet the requirements for a license.**

Items not in compliance with the licensing rules will be identified and you will be instructed to request another initial licensing VISIT when all the items have been met. When you notify the department to schedule another visit, the department will attempt to make a visit within the next 20 working days, but it may take longer depending on regional licensing workloads. If you are not in compliance after two visits, your application for a license may be denied because you do not meet the requirements for a license.

16. **Licensed Capacity.** Use the formula below to determine how many children are included in the licensed capacity. We understand that the process of determining licensed capacity can be confusing. Please contact the regional licensing office if you have any questions.

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   \text{Total licensed capacity} = \text{Total number of children under the age of 7 who are cared for in groups that are separate from the groups containing children age 7 and older.} + \text{Total number of children in all the mixed age groups that have children under the age of 7 grouped with children age 7 and older. Note: All children in the mixed age group are counted in the licensed capacity.} + \text{Total number of children age 7 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 the age of 7. Note: See Item No. 1 above for information regarding subsidy payments.}
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17. **Licensing Fee.** To determine your license fee due, use the following formula:

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   \text{Total license fee} = \text{Base fee} + \text{Per-child fee} \times \text{total licensed capacity as determined by No. 16 above.} = \text{Total two-year licensing fee (Divide this total by 4 to determine your six-month probationary license fee.)}
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18. **Submit your 6-month probationary license fee.** Send a check or money order in the appropriate amount as determined by No. 17 above made payable to the "Department of Children and Families". Mail with your completed materials to the regional office in your area.

19. **When we receive your application, we will review it, and a licensing specialist will contact you to complete the licensing process.**

20. **Under the authority of s. 48.73, Wis. Stats., the department must be granted unrestricted access to your premises for the purpose of monitoring your compliance with the licensing rules.** If you fail to allow access to a department representative, the department shall take enforcement action against your license under s. 47.715, Wis. Stats., including issuance of orders, forfeitures or revocation of your license. In addition, if the department is unable to monitor for compliance or verify correction of license violations, it may affect your eligibility to receive child care subsidy payments pursuant to DCF 201.04.