

# Regulation Helps Child Care Businesses Succeed



Being a child care provider is a very fulfilling and rewarding career. The care children receive in their early years has a big impact on their learning, healthy development, and future success. That's why providing safe and nurturing child care is so important. A big part of ensuring safe child care in Wisconsin is regulation. DCF monitors all licensed and many certified child care providers in the state by setting the minimum health and safety standard requirements. What's more, we offer tools to help providers exceed those standards. This is because Wisconsin needs quality child care more than ever—and DCF wants to help you succeed.

## Why is regulated child care so important?

### It helps providers protect children's health and safety

The goal of any child care provider should be to offer a safe and healthy environment for kids to learn and grow. That's DCF's goal, too! Our regulations ensure all licensed and certified providers meet the minimum health and safety requirements. These include the following:

#### **Criminal background check for all child care staff supervision: Ratios and group sizes**

- Staff-to-child ratio limits the number of children a staff member can care for
- Maximum group size limits the number of children staff members can supervise in a specific setting

#### **Ongoing safety training for staff, such as:**

- Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and automated external defibrillator (AED)
- First aid
- Safe sleep practices for infants
- Child abuse and neglect
- Abusive Head Trauma/Shaken Baby Syndrome Prevention

#### **Sanitary and building requirements, such as:**

- Hygiene practices like preventing the spread of germs
- Children and staff health practices like immunizations
- Building safety and emergency planning

#### **Ongoing monitoring and inspections**

- Ensures that providers meet minimum health and safety requirements

## Becoming a regulated child care provider has benefits!

### Top 5 benefits of becoming a regulated child care provider

1. Regulated providers can become eligible to care for families who are receiving child care subsidies through Wisconsin Shares. [dcf.wisconsin.gov/wishares/providers](https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/wishares/providers)
2. Regulated providers are listed on the Child Care Finder, making it easier for families to find their program.
3. Regulated providers can participate in YoungStar, Wisconsin's child care quality rating and improvement system.
4. Regulated providers often gain access to local or state referral programs.
5. Regulated providers can join the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), which provides reimbursement for nutritious meals and snacks served to enrolled infants and children.



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## How do you become a regulated child care provider?

In Wisconsin, **all licensed and certified child care providers are regulated by DCF**. Depending on the type of care you provide, you may be legally required to become licensed or choose to become voluntarily certified. The first step is understanding where you fit in the regulation system.

### Licensed child care

State law requires a license to provide care for four or more children under the age of 7 and unrelated to the provider. There are three different categories of state-licensed child care:

- **Licensed Family Child Care Centers:** Care for four to 12 children, usually in the provider's home.
- **Licensed Group Child Care Centers:** Care for 12 or more children, usually in a commercial space.
- **Licensed Day Camps:** Seasonal programs that provide experiences for four or more children 3 years of age and older. Day camps usually operate in an outdoor setting.

\*There are some exceptions to Wisconsin's licensing requirements. You can find the full list at [dcf.wisconsin.gov/ccregulation](https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/ccregulation).

### Certified child care

Certification is a voluntary form of regulation. This is available to family child care providers who are not required to be licensed. Certified providers can care for up to three children under age 7, usually in the provider's home. These providers are commonly:

- Family members
- Professional nannies
- Trusted neighbors or friends

Becoming certified also provides a pathway for providers to accept Wisconsin Shares child care subsidies.



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To learn more about regulation, licensing, or certification, visit  
[dcf.wisconsin.gov/cclicensing/startcc](https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cclicensing/startcc).

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families is your trusted source of information, resources, and support for child care providers!

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