



Assessing Child Care Quality and Safety

Assessing the quality and safety of child care facilities is a crucial undertaking to ensure the well-being and development of young children. This process involves evaluating various aspects of child care settings to guarantee that they meet the highest standards in providing a secure and nurturing environment for children.

Family Involvement

- Child care programs should work with families to meet the needs of all enrolled children. Family involvement is when families attend activities, meetings, or events in the child care setting or inform child care educators with information about their child.
- Child care programs with an open-door policy allow parents, grandparents, or guardians to visit freely at any time.

Staff Education and Turnover

- Child care educators working in a licensed child care program in Missouri must attain 12 clock hours of training each year. Further training is optional, for example, through college courses, degrees, or credentialing.
- Low staff turnover provides stability for children. Low staff turnover indicates the program has a welcoming, supportive, and positive environment.

Health and Safety

- Health and safety practices protect children and caregivers from harm and illness.
- Caregivers should regularly wash and disinfect their hands, diaper changing stations, and toys.
- Cleaning supplies and other potentially hazardous materials should be stored safely and out of reach of children.
- Licensed and license-exempt programs are required to meet the state of Missouri's health and safety standards.

Licensing Reports

- Licensing reports are available to the public and demonstrate how a program meets child care licensing standards.
- Program licensing reports are available online at https://webapp01.dhss.mo.gov/child_caresearch/search_engine.aspx

Accreditation

- Accredited programs have gone through a process to show they meet additional standards above licensing regulations. Accredited programs have certificates available for review.

Background Checks

- All employees in licensed child care programs go through background screenings and fingerprinting.
- Background screenings include a Missouri state criminal background check, child abuse and neglect information, and sexual offender records.
- Background checks can be done on any caregiver, neighbor, nanny, etc. by contacting Missouri's Family Care Safety Registry (FCSR). For more information about the FCSR, call 1-866-422-6872 or visit the website at <https://health.mo.gov/safety/fcsr/>.

Group Size

- Group size can affect children's interactions and performance in the classroom.
- While some children enjoy working in small groups or one-on-one, others may enjoy being with a large group of children.
- Small group sizes may reduce a child's feelings of being overwhelmed and allow for more individualized attention.
- Consider your child's needs when selecting a program that will best fit your family.



Ratios

When exploring licensed child care, be aware of child-to-adult ratio requirements. As younger infants and toddlers require more individualized care, ratios are lower for these age groups. As children age, child-to-adult ratios may increase. Below are the child-to-adult ratios for different licensed child care settings.

• Family Child Care Program Ratios

- A family child care program is operated from the child care educator's residence. In this setting, up to 10 children can be cared for at a time. The exact number of children depends on the ages of the children in care and the number of adults providing child care.

The chart below explains the different group combinations that are allowed.

Number of adults providing child care	Total number of children allowed	Maximum number of children under the age of 2 allowed
With one adult	10	2
	6	3
	4	4
With two adults	10	4
	8	8

• Group Child Care Home and Child Care Center Ratios

- A group child care home (small center) is a child care program that is either at a separate facility or an area separate from the child care educator's living quarters. In this setting, 11 to 20 children can be cared for.
- A child care center is a program operating at a separate facility. This type of program can care for 20 or more children, with the maximum number depending on the amount of space, materials, and the director's education and professional experience.

The chart below explains the ratios for each age group in group homes and child care centers.

Age group	Number of children per adult
Under age two	4
Two-year-olds	8
Three- to four-year olds	10
Kindergarten and school-age	16
Mixed age group (two years and older)	10 (with a maximum of 4 two-year-olds)