



Idaho Child Care Center

BUSINESS GUIDE



Introduction

There are many things to consider when starting a new child care center. These resources will help you think through the steps you need to take to open and operate a successful child care center in Idaho.

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Child Care Definitions

Child Care Centers

In Idaho, child care programs may be home-based or center-based, and they are required to have a child care license if caring for seven (7) or more children. **Idaho child care centers** are facilities that receive compensation for the care of 13 or more children. These programs have a dedicated director and numerous staff. Child care centers are generally operated out of non-residential, commercial buildings, and children are often grouped by age. Some child care centers may operate as a non-profit. They may be owned by an individual, faith-based organization, public school or government agency. Other child care centers may operate for profit and may be owned by an individual or a corporate chain.

** Please note that in Idaho, the licensing office and regulations refer to child care centers as daycare centers.*



Child Care Resource Centers

Idaho has seven (7) regional Child Care Resource Centers (CCRCs) that work with child care providers, owners and directors to provide support and resources. They have many tools for your business and professional development needs. They will be an important partner for you and your center before, during and after the licensing process. The regional offices are operated by IdahoSTARS.

Take a moment to find your local Child Care Resource Center here: <https://idahostars.org/Child-Care-Providers/CCRC/CCRC-Regions>. Record the appropriate contact information below so that you can return to it whenever you need to reach out for assistance or with questions.

Name of Regional Child Care Resource Center

Contact Person

2-1-1 (in Idaho) or 1(800) 926-2588

Careline Phone Number

Local Phone Number

Email



Opening a Child Care Center

Are you interested in opening a child care center? This section will help you learn more about what you need to do to start a child care business.

In the following pages you will find different resources to help you get started with your business. These resources are meant to help you think through important questions. Your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) can help you understand the specific rules and regulations you need to follow to operate a quality program. They will be an important resource as you start your child care business.

Before you begin your new career path, find out if child care is the right choice for you. The following resource will help you evaluate why you want to start a child care business.



RESOURCE 1: Are You Ready to Start a Child Care Center?

This resource is meant to help you think about the reasons why you want to open a child care center and if it is the right choice for you. There are both personal and professional considerations for you to think about as you start your journey.

Personal Considerations

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Do you have a passion for helping children and their parents?			
Do you enjoy being with young children and have the patience to care for them for many hours each day?			
Are you able to manage conflict successfully if it arises with staff and/or families?			
Are you able to get along with multiple types of families and children, even if their parenting style or culture are different than yours?			
Do you have the physical and emotional strength to run a child care business?			
If you have children or other people in your life who need you during child care hours of operation, have you identified someone to care for them if they become sick or need something?			
Do you have a positive attitude, even when challenges arise?			
Does your family support your decision?			

RESOURCE 1: Are You Ready to Start a Child Care Center?

Professional Considerations

	Yes	No	Not Sure
Are you a self-starter?			
Do you have the required education needed in your state/city/county to operate a child care center?			
Do you have knowledge and previous experience to run a child care center?			
Do you know where to go to for training or help in running your child care center?			
Are you comfortable working with licensing requirements and government regulations?			
Do you have the time to learn the necessary skills or are you willing to hire people with different skill sets that you need to have a successful child care center?			
Are you able to plan and organize well? Think about managing staff, planning for children and ensuring families receive timely communication from you.			
Do you have experience in hiring, training and supervising employees?			
Are you comfortable with the potential legal, professional and personal risks associated with starting a new business?			
Have you undertaken similar responsibilities that have demonstrated you have the motivation and determination needed to make your business successful?			
Do you have access to funds you may need to start your business?			
Are you aware of the required amount of business and professional liability insurance you need for your child care program?			

If you checked “**Yes**” to all of these items, you are ready to continue exploring the next steps in starting your child care business!

If you checked “**No**” or “**Not Sure**” to some of the items, reach out to your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) for help (<https://idahostars.org/Child-Care-Providers/CCRC/CCRC-Regions>).



Do Your Research

Begin by learning some of the basic information about child care and opening a child care center in Idaho. The following sections will guide you through topics you should learn about before taking steps to open a child care business.



Topics in this section:

- 08** Needs Assessment
- 13** Child Care Licensing
- 15** Background Checks
- 21** Legal, Tax and Insurance Considerations

Complete a Needs Assessment

Understanding the community need for child care is critical for your business to be successful. As you think about opening a child care center, take the time to do a complete and thorough needs assessment. This is an important first step toward building your business plan, and it is critical for determining whether your community needs your services. One of the reasons that business owners of all types succeed is because they continually consider the needs of their consumers.



RESOURCE 2: Child Care Center Needs Assessment

There are three parts to the needs assessment. First, you need to have data on what type of child care is being offered in your community. Second, you will want to understand more about families that you might serve through your child care business. Finally, you will want to know what other child care centers in your area charge for child care. This will help you build your budget.

Contact your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) for help with the needs assessment. Have this checklist with you when you contact them and fill in answers or comments as you speak with a specialist.

Part 1: Current Child Care Landscape

Question	Answer/Comment
<p>Who else is providing child care in your area? <i>Ask your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) about the number of center-based and in-home child care providers in your area.</i></p>	<p># of licensed child care centers: # of family child care homes: # of school-based providers: Other:</p>
<p>Where are the other child care programs located? <i>In the geographic area where you want to open your business, who provides child care services and where are they located? Think about churches, local community centers and schools as well as traditional child care providers.</i></p>	
<p>Is there a need for child care for a specific age group? <i>Think about the current providers in the area and what age groups they are serving.</i></p>	<p>Infants (birth-12 months): Toddlers (1-2 years): Preschool (3-4 years): Pre-K (4-5 years): Before/after care for school-age children (5+ years):</p>
<p>Is there a need for child care during a specific time of the day? <i>Think about whether you might provide before and/or after-school care to school-age children or children enrolled in part-time pre-k programs. Ask if there is a need for evening, weekend, 24-hour and/or overnight child care options.</i></p>	
<p>Is the need for child care in your area likely to change in the next 2-5 years? Why? <i>Think about whether there are local companies that are expanding or closing, whether your local schools may be providing child care services or other factors that could influence the need.</i></p>	

RESOURCE 2: Child Care Center Needs Assessment

Part 2: Family Demographics

Question	Answer/Comment
<p>How many families with young children live in your area? <i>Consider families with children birth-5 years, as well as families with school-age children if you want to serve that age group.</i></p>	
<p>How many of the families with young children in your area might need child care? <i>Ask your CCRC for current statistics on the number of families that may need care.</i></p>	
<p>Where do local parents work? What are typical working hours? <i>Think about the families who might use your program. Some businesses, such as hospitals, factories, emergency services, etc. are open during non-traditional hours. Some families may work for organizations that have more typical work hours. You will want to think about family needs in designing your program.</i></p>	
<p>How long is the typical commute? <i>Do families live in suburban areas and commute to a more urban area for work? Are you in a rural area where commute times may be shorter or longer, depending on where parents work? You will need to consider these things as you think about your hours of operation.</i></p>	



RESOURCE 2: Child Care Center Needs Assessment

Part 3: Determine Costs

Question	Answer/Comment
<p>What are the typical fees (the market rate) for child care in your area? <i>Check with your CCRC for this information.</i></p>	<p>Child care center average rate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infants: \$ _____/week • Toddlers: \$ _____/week • Preschool: \$ _____/week • Pre-K: \$ _____/week • School-age: \$ _____/week <p>Family child care average rate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infants: \$ _____/week • Toddlers: \$ _____/week • Preschool: \$ _____/week • Pre-K: \$ _____/week • School-age: \$ _____/week
<p>Do parents in your area typically get help to pay for child care, such as through the Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP)?</p>	<p>Yes No</p>
<p>Will your program be eligible to accept subsidies (such as ICCP)?</p>	<p>Yes No</p>
<p>What would your program need to do to be eligible to accept subsidies (such as ICCP)?</p>	
<p>Based on the number of children you plan to enroll, what is your per child cost? <i>Contact your local CCRC for help in calculating this information.</i></p>	<p>Infants: \$ _____/week Toddlers: \$ _____/week Preschool: \$ _____/week Pre-K: \$ _____/week School-age: \$ _____/week</p>

RESOURCE 2: Child Care Center Needs Assessment

Part 3: Determine Costs CONTINUED

Question	Answer/Comment
<p>What fees do you need to charge parents to have a profitable program? Can parents in your area afford the fees?</p> <p><i>Contact your local CCRC for help in calculating this information.</i></p>	<p>Infants: \$ _____/week</p> <p>Toddlers: \$ _____/week</p> <p>Preschool: \$ _____/week</p> <p>Pre-K: \$ _____/week</p> <p>School-age: \$ _____/week</p>
<p>How much will it cost you to start a new child care business? How much will it cost you to operate your child care business on an ongoing basis?</p> <p><i>Contact your local CCRC for help in calculating this information or use the Provider Cost of Quality Calculator.</i></p>	
<p>How many staff do you need to hire? What will you pay the staff? Will you be able to offer any benefits?</p>	



Learn About Licensing

What is a child care license?

A child care license addresses the minimum acceptable health, safety and program standards for the legal operation of child care programs. Idaho law sets the regulations for child care licensing. The Idaho Daycare Licensing Program is administered by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare, along with local fire departments and health districts. Local city and county governments may also create and enforce their own licensing requirements, as long as they are equal to or have higher standards than the state regulations.

Your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) can help you determine if you will need a city or county license, state license or both. Your CCRC and the Idaho Daycare Licensing Program can provide you with information on Idaho's licensing requirements.

Idaho Daycare Licensing Program

1(800) 926-2588 or 2-1-1 (in Idaho)

customersupport@idahoaeyc.org

<https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/providers/child-care-providers/becoming-child-care-provider>



What areas does a child care license cover?

Idaho's Basic Daycare License covers the following topics:

⇒ Safety standards

- Outdoor environment (including bodies of water and fencing requirements)
- First aid and CPR training
- Supervision
- Staff:child ratio

⇒ Health standards

- Food safety
- Diaper changing
- Play and sleeping areas, including infant safe sleep practices
- Storage of medicine, cleaning supplies and other hazardous substances
- Handwashing
- Prohibition of drinking alcohol and smoking on premises during operating hours

⇒ Visitation

⇒ Access to information

⇒ Background checks, including criminal offenses that prohibit an individual from becoming licensed

⇒ Immunization requirements

⇒ Training requirements

You can find the detailed licensing requirements for Idaho here:

Title 39 Health and Safety: Chapter 11 Basic Day Care License

<https://legislature.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/statutesrules/idstat/Title39/T39CH11.pdf>

IDAPA Code: 16.06.02 Rules Governing Standards for Child Care Licensing

<https://adminrules.idaho.gov/rules/current/16/160602.pdf>

NOTE: Sections 000-299 are applicable to various licensing programs. Sections 300-399 are specific to Daycare licensing.

How much does it cost to become licensed?

NOTE: Please check with your regional Child Care Resource Center to learn the cost to become licensed in the area where you plan to open your child care center.

The 2020 state licensing fees for child care centers are as follows:

- Centers with 13-25 children in attendance at any given time: \$250
- Centers with 26 or more children in attendance at any given time is: \$325

Be sure to verify your fee on the child care licensing website, as these amounts may change over time.

How does my child care center become licensed?

Before you apply for your state child care license, be sure that you have done your research. You can find information on each of these topics on the pages listed below:

- Complete a child care needs assessment in your community ([pages 9-12](#))
- Review and understand all licensing requirements ([pages 17-20](#))
- Research and decide on a legal structure and insurance coverage for your business ([pages 25-28](#))
- Select an appropriate and allowable location ([page 34](#))

After you have completed your research and selected a location, you can begin the application process. However, the application will not be complete until all documents are submitted.

You should determine if you need a child care license from the state, your city/county, or both. Contact your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) for help with this. If you need a city or county license, they can direct you to the right place to apply.

If you need a state license, the next step will be to visit <https://idahostars.org/Child-Care-Providers/Child-Care-Licensing> for information about the licensing application process. You will be directed to create a RISE account online and to create a facility profile for your child care center. Your RISE account is where you will apply for an Idaho child care license as well as where you can take online trainings, apply for scholarships, apply for the Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP - Idaho's subsidy program) and keep your facility's information up-to-date for parent referrals.

Your RISE account will provide you with a checklist of steps to take and documents to submit in order to complete your state licensing application. Some of the required documents/steps for the application include:

- Creating a facility profile
- Background check
- Infant-child CPR and first aid certification (keep in mind that online programs are not acceptable unless there is a hands-on skills test in front of a live instructor)
- Local compliance (this will vary by city or county but may include a business license, special use permit and/or a letter from city/county saying you are in compliance with local ordinances)
- Proof of liability and fire insurance
- Approved fire inspection
- Licensing fee
- Health inspection

The worksheet on [page 17](#) will go into more detail on each of these documents and steps.

How is a state license different than a city or county license?

Idaho state law sets the basic standards for state licensing, which include requirements for health and safety, training, record keeping, background checks and immunizations. These are considered the minimum standards that all licensed child care providers must meet.

Some cities and counties in Idaho have created local requirements for child care businesses. These city

and county requirements must meet the minimum standards set by Idaho state law, but they may also be stricter and/or more detailed in specific requirement areas. Contact your regional CCRC to find city and county requirements for child care licensing/certification.

Understand Background Checks

What type of background checks do directors and staff need?

Idaho child care licensing regulations require that child care center owners, directors, regular and substitute caregivers, volunteers and frequent visitors (on the premises more than 12 hours a month) in the child care center must complete a criminal history and background check and receive enhanced clearance.

A criminal history and background check includes a fingerprint-based check of a person's individual criminal record and other relevant records. The enhanced clearance also includes a search of the child protection registries in states and/or jurisdictions where the applying individual has lived in the past 5 years.

Additionally, any staff member, volunteer or frequent visitor between the ages of 13 and 17 is required to request a Juvenile Records Check: <https://publicdocuments.dhw.idaho.gov/WebLink/DocView.aspx?id=1569&dbid=0&repo=PUBLIC-DOCUMENTS&cr=1>.

Some cities or counties may have their own background check requirements and process. Check with your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) about which local requirements you will need to meet.

How do I request a background check?

- STEP 1** The child care business owner should create an **agency account** with the Criminal History Unit at <https://chu.dhw.idaho.gov> in order to obtain an agency identification number. You will need your agency identification number for your background check application (see Step 2).
- STEP 2** Create a **background check account** and complete the application at <https://chu.dhw.idaho.gov>. The completed application must be printed, notarized and submitted online. Be sure to include your agency identification number.
- STEP 3** After submitting the application materials online, you will then be able to schedule a fingerprinting appointment online. You will have the opportunity to select the Department of Health and Welfare location where you would like to make your appointment, as well as the time and date. You will also be able to see the application fee once the application is submitted online. The standard background check application fee is \$65, however be sure to review the background check website for any updates. There may also be additional fees if out-of-state background checks are needed.
- STEP 4** Bring the printed and notarized application to your fingerprinting appointment.

Mail-in instructions:

If you would prefer to mail in your background check materials rather than submitting them online, you will need to include:

- all pages of the signed and notarized application
- your completed fingerprint cards
- the applicable fee

If you select this method, you will need to make an appointment on your own (rather than online) for fingerprinting and ensure the agency you select has the correct card; most law enforcement offices should be able to assist you. Please note that this option may have additional fees and processing time, depending on which agency helps you with completing your fingerprint card (Application FD-258 cards must be used).

Additional information on the background check process, including detailed mail-in instructions and frequently asked questions, can be found at <https://chu.dhw.idaho.gov>.

RESOURCE 3: Licensing Requirements

Use this checklist to help you think through the steps you will need to follow to become a licensed child care center business and to obtain a background check. Check with your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) for more information.

Question	Response	Comment
<p>What kind of license(s) will I need to have for my child care center?</p> <p><i>Contact your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) for this information.</i></p>	<p>Idaho child care license</p> <p>City child care license</p> <p>County child care license</p>	
<p>What will I need to submit as proof of compliance with local ordinances?</p> <p><i>Contact your local CCRC for information on what documents you will need to submit.</i></p>	<p>Business license</p> <p>Business registration</p> <p>Planning and zoning permit</p> <p>Home occupation certificate</p> <p>Special use permit</p> <p>Letter from city or county stating that I am in compliance with local ordinances</p> <p>Food service permit</p> <p>Other _____</p>	
<p>Have I created a RISE account to apply for an Idaho child care license (and the Idaho Child Care Program, if desired)?</p> <p><i>Visit https://rise.idahostars.org/#.</i></p> <p>Is my facility profile complete in RISE?</p>	<p>Yes No</p> <p>Yes No</p>	
<p>What is my licensing fee?</p> <p><i>Ask your CCRC about licensing fees in the area where you want to start your child care center.</i></p>	<p>\$250 (centers with 13-25 children in attendance at any given time - 2020 rate)</p> <p>\$325 (centers with 26+ children in attendance at any given time - 2020 rate)</p> <p>County/city fee: \$_____</p>	

RESOURCE 3: Licensing Requirements

Question	Response	Comment
<p>Inspection information</p>	<p>Fire inspection</p> <p>Contact the local Fire District and request a Fire Safety Inspection for Child Care</p> <p>Download the required form: https://idahostars.org/portals/61/Docs/Providers/ICCP/FireSafetyInspectionChecklist.pdf</p> <p>Complete inspection</p> <p>Submit the completed fire inspection form through your RISE account</p> <p>Health District inspection</p> <p>Review health and safety guidelines for inspection (contact your regional CCRC for the current checklist)</p> <p>Complete inspection (A Customer Support Specialist will send your referral to the Health District, who will then contact you to complete the inspection.)</p>	
<p>How many children can my program care for at one time?</p>	<p>Infants: _____</p> <p>Toddlers: _____</p> <p>Preschool: _____</p> <p>Pre-K: _____</p> <p>School-age: _____</p>	

RESOURCE 3: Licensing Requirements

Question	Response	Comment
<p>Background check completion</p> <p>Visit https://chu.dhw.idaho.gov</p> <p>How often will I need to do a background check?</p>	<p>Create agency account with Criminal History Unit to obtain agency ID number (must be included on background check application)</p> <p>Create background check account with Criminal History Unit</p> <p>Complete background check application</p> <p>Print completed application</p> <p>Have completed application notarized</p> <p>Submit application online (or by mail, along with fingerprints and fee)</p> <p>Make fingerprinting appointment</p> <p>Have fingerprints taken by Health District (or other office, if opting for mail-in process)</p> <p>Pay application fee: \$ _____</p> <p>Frequency: _____</p>	
<p>Other background check information:</p> <p>Owners, regular and substitute caregivers, volunteers and frequent visitors (on the premises more than 12 hours a month) must complete a criminal history and background check and receive enhanced clearance.</p> <p>State licensing requires that staff members, volunteers or frequent visitors between the ages of 13 and 17 must also request a Juvenile Records Check: https://publicdocuments.dhw.idaho.gov/WebLink/DocView.aspx?id=1569&dbid=0&repo=PUBLIC-DOCUMENTS&cr=1</p> <p><i>Check with your regional CCRC for local requirements.</i></p> <p>How often will my staff and/or volunteers need a background check?</p>	<p>Juvenile Records Check required:</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>Frequency: _____</p>	

RESOURCE 3: Licensing Requirements

Question	Response	Comment
<p>What proof of insurance do I need to submit as part of my licensing application?</p> <p><i>Idaho licensing requires you to submit proof of Liability and Fire Insurance through your RISE account. Check with your local CCRC to see if your local area has additional insurance requirements.</i></p>	<p>Fire insurance</p> <p>Liability insurance</p> <p>Other: _____</p>	
<p>Does my state or local area require a degree or special certification to operate a center?</p> <p><i>Idaho does not currently require a degree or special certification, but check with your regional CCRC to determine whether your local area has education requirements.</i></p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>No</p>	
<p>What type of training do I need to open a child care center? Who offers the training? What costs are associated with the trainings?</p> <p><i>Idaho requires certifications in Pediatric Rescue Breathing, Infant-Child CPR and First Aid to be submitted with your RISE account. The Idaho Child Care Program (subsidy program) has additional training requirements.</i></p> <p><i>Check with your regional CCRC to determine whether your local area has additional training requirements.</i></p> <p>Child care owners/operators and staff must complete four (4) hours of ongoing training every 12 months from their date of hire.</p> <p><i>The training will count if the staff member takes the training after their hire date. It will be credited for the licensing period in which the training was taken and will count only one time.</i></p>	<p>Required initial trainings:</p> <p>Pediatric Rescue Breathing and Infant-Child CPR (certificate must be submitted through RISE account)</p> <p>Cost: \$ _____</p> <p>First Aid Treatment (certificate must be submitted with licensing application)</p> <p>Cost: \$ _____</p> <p>Other: _____</p> <p>Training options:</p> <p>Online through my RISE account</p> <p>In person from my regional CCRC</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>What type of equipment and supplies do I need?</p>		

Research Legal, Tax and Insurance Considerations

Choose a Legal Structure

Here are some ways in which you can structure your child care business:

- ⇒ **Sole proprietorship:** You own an unincorporated business by yourself.
- ⇒ **Partnership:** You join with two or more persons to own your child care business. You divide your profits and losses among partners.
- ⇒ **Limited Liability Company (LLC):** This is a business structure that combines features of both a corporation and a partnership or sole proprietorship model. It protects your personal assets so that you are not personally liable for the company's debts or liabilities.
- ⇒ **Tax-exempt organization:** As a tax-exempt organization, any money after expenses is returned to the operation of the program. To claim this status, you must meet Internal Revenue Service (IRS) eligibility requirements.
- ⇒ **Incorporation:** Your business is set up so shareholders exchange money, property or both for the corporation's capital stock. This structure protects your personal assets.

Your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) may have trainings or information to help you with these business decisions, or you may need to consult legal advice to decide how to set up your business.

Taxes

As a small business, you will need to file business income tax information with local, state and federal agencies unless your business is tax-exempt. Taxes should be a part of any budget for a child care business. You may want to consult with a tax professional, such as an accountant or a lawyer that specializes in business practices, to help you.

Insurance Considerations

Insurance protects you when emergencies or disasters occur. Idaho law requires that licensed child care centers have fire and liability insurance coverage for the child care facility. You should also contact your regional CCRC to determine if there are any specific county or city requirements for insurance coverage.

There are a variety of insurance types that you will want to investigate, even if it is not required for your state, city or county license.

Business Owner's Insurance generally is a combination of liability and property insurance. Buying the package is usually less expensive than buying separate policies.

- **General Liability Insurance** covers bodily injury or property damage that occurs during the course or because of your business. It is important to verify that it covers medical expenses for children injured in your care and coverage of lawsuit expenses.

- **Property Insurance** covers all of your business equipment inside and outside of your program.
- **Business Income and Extra Expense** coverage is something you may want to consider adding. It covers loss of income (employee payroll) and expenses if you must temporarily close due to an emergency.
- **Fire Insurance** is a form of property insurance that covers damage and loss caused by a fire.

Professional Liability Insurance insures you and your staff for losses due to your negligence while performing your business. Coverage for sexual abuse and molestation is generally included in professional liability insurance, but verify this with your insurance agent. Sexual or physical abuse coverage insures you for loss if one of your employees or others with access to children in your program abuses a child in your care.

Worker's Compensation Insurance is required to be in place the day your first employee is hired. This insurance pays benefits when an employee is injured while working.

An insurance agent can discuss these options with you in greater detail.

Risk Management

Opening a child care business comes with risk. It is impossible to completely eliminate all risk, but you can take steps to manage and reduce risk as much

as possible. Risk management means thinking about situations within your business that could lead to injury, suffering or major expenses, and then putting practices in place that will minimize the chances that those situations will occur. This is an ongoing process; you will need to go through an assessment and planning process, and you will also need to continue to evaluate your risks and risk management practices.

Some areas of risk to consider include:

⇒ Physical injury:

- Areas where staff, children, or families could slip, trip or fall
- Heavy objects that could cause injury to adults when lifting, bending or squatting
- Machinery, equipment or appliances that could cause injury if combustion or malfunction occurs
- Chemicals or hazardous substances that could pose a risk of poisoning or fire
- Animals or insects that could injure or cause an allergic reaction to children or adults
- Child abuse
- Vehicle accidents, if your center offers transportation
- Other areas where physical harm could occur

⇒ Illness:

- Transmission of viruses and bacteria
- Food-borne illness
- Presence of mold or mildew

➡ **Mental health:**

- Bullying, harassment, discrimination
- Workplace stress for self or employees

➡ **Disasters and emergencies:**

- Natural disasters
- Fires
- Active shooter situations
- Lost child
- Pandemics
- Other disasters or emergencies that could occur in your area

Limiting risk begins with ensuring that you are following all state and local licensing requirements, developing staff and family handbooks that clearly communicate policies and expectations, and obtaining the proper insurance coverage.

Additionally, consider creating a checklist of any potential hazards. You may want to set aside time to walk through the center with your staff, considering each area from the point of view of adults and from the height and level of children. Make a note of any hazards or potential hazards that are found. Plan for how to consistently minimize the risks noted.

Once you have made your risk management plan, make sure that all staff are very familiar with and knowledgeable about the plan and know their role in minimizing the risks throughout the center. Determine how you will ensure the plan is being followed and when changes will need to be made. (Some of the steps you will need to take will already be covered by licensing requirements, such as proper background screening of staff, staff training in certain health and safety topics, and creating an emergency preparedness plan).

In addition to securing the proper insurance and implementing a risk management plan, you should think about how you will access legal aid if you need it. When you purchase business liability insurance for your center, find out if your policy can hire a lawyer for you at no cost to defend your business in an injury claim, licensing action or other lawsuit. Low-income Americans may be eligible for free legal aid through the Legal Services Corporation (<https://www.lsc.gov/what-legal-aid/find-legal-aid>), or you can research legal services in your area to find a lawyer who you can call in case legal issues arise.

Federal and State Employment Laws

Any child care business that has hired staff must follow federal, state and local employment laws. Some of the areas covered by employment laws are listed below.

Discrimination: It is illegal to treat an employee, child or family differently/unfairly due to race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age or disability.

Minimum wage: This is the minimum amount you can legally pay an employee per hour. The minimum wage in Idaho in 2020 is \$7.25 an hour (this is also the federal minimum wage), but it may be higher in specific cities or counties.

Overtime compensation: The federal Fair Labor Standards Act requires all non-exempt employees to be paid one and a half times their normal hourly rate for any time worked over 40 hours in a work week. For more information visit <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/flsa>.

Training: In most situations it is required to pay employees for training hours. If you have questions about this, contact the Idaho Department of Labor for additional information.

Breaks: Idaho employment law does not require paid breaks, but the federal Fair Labor Standards Act states that if any work is expected of an employee during their break, whether it is active or inactive, it must be counted as paid working time.

Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA): FMLA allows eligible employees to take unpaid leave for certain family or medical reasons, without losing their job. To learn more, visit <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WHD/legacy/files/employerguide.pdf>.

You can find detailed information on the federal Fair Labor Standards Act and the Idaho Labor Laws using the resources below:

- Federal Fair Labor Standards Act: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/46-flsa-daycare>
- Idaho Labor Laws: <https://www.labor.idaho.gov/dnn/Businesses/Idaho-Labor-Laws>

Cities and/or counties may also have local laws in addition to state and federal laws, so it is important to check with your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) to learn about local requirements.

You may be legally required to post specific labor notices in a visible area for employees. Learn more about workplace poster compliance here: <https://www.dol.gov/general/topics/posters>. You may be able to obtain free posters from the federal Department of Labor and from the Idaho Department of Labor, or you may choose to purchase a subscription for poster updates from one of many businesses that offer this service. This meets the legal requirement to post state and federal information and helps employers stay informed.



RESOURCE 4: Legal and Insurance Considerations

Starting a business will require you to think about legal and insurance issues to make sure you are covered in case of an accident or injury. You will also want to take steps to reduce risk in your business and ensure that you are following all labor laws when hiring and managing your employees.

The questions below and your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) will help you think through some of these considerations. You may also want to consult a lawyer and a tax professional before you start your child care business.

Legal Considerations

	Yes	No	Comments
Have you consulted a lawyer to help set up the legal structure and other areas of your business?			
Have you decided whether to operate as a non-profit or a for-profit?			
Have you decided on a business structure? Sole proprietorship (self-employed) Partnership Limited Liability Company (LLC) Corporation			
Have you created a business name?			
Have you registered the business name with your state/county/city?			
Have you obtained a business license number, if required?			
Have you consulted with a tax professional to help you with payroll taxes and business income taxes?			

RESOURCE 4: Legal and Insurance Considerations

Insurance Considerations

	Yes	No	Comments
Have you talked to your state licensing agency or regional Child Care Resource Center to understand what insurance coverage you might need?			
Have you obtained at least two quotes from insurance agents that represent different insurance companies (for comparison)?			
Have you purchased business liability insurance, which should include general liability, property and fire insurance?			
Have you purchased professional liability insurance, and does this insurance cover you if one of your employees or others with access to the children in your program abused a child in your care?			
If you are providing transportation, have you purchased commercial automobile coverage?			
Have you purchased worker's compensation insurance?			

RESOURCE 4: Legal and Insurance Considerations

Risk Management

	Yes	No	Comments
<p>Have you evaluated all areas of your center (indoors and outdoors) for potential hazards and the risks associated with those hazards?</p> <p>Physical injury of self, staff, children, families</p> <p>Illness</p> <p>Mental health of self, staff, children</p> <p>Disasters and emergencies</p>			
<p>Have you created a plan for how you will minimize risk in all areas where it was identified?</p>			
<p>Have all staff members been trained in the risk management plan, and does everyone know their role in reducing risk?</p>			
<p>Do you have a back-up plan in case a staff member is unable to perform their risk management responsibilities?</p>			
<p>Does your plan include how you will determine that the risk management steps are being followed and whether changes are needed?</p>			
<p>Does your plan include the frequency that you will revisit the plan to determine if you need to make changes?</p>			

RESOURCE 4: Legal and Insurance Considerations

Federal and State Employment Laws

	Yes	No	Comments
<p>Have you reviewed the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act?</p> <p>Have you consulted a lawyer if you have questions about federal labor laws?</p> <p>https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/fact-sheets/46-flsa-daycare</p>			
<p>Have you reviewed Idaho Labor Laws?</p> <p>https://www.labor.idaho.gov/dnn/Businesses/Idaho-Labor-Laws</p>			
<p>Have you consulted a lawyer if you have questions about state labor laws?</p>			
<p>Do you know whether you are required to post notices of certain labor laws in a visible location for your employees?</p>			
<p>Do you know where to obtain the required posters, if needed?</p>			

Action Steps

Now that you know the basics, it is time for action! The next few sections will go over the different steps you will need to take to prepare to open a new child care center.



Topics in this section:

- 30** Budgeting
- 33** Location
- 38** Policies and Procedures
- 42** Staffing
- 45** Marketing

Prepare a Budget

Preparing a budget gives you a picture of whether your projected revenue will cover your expected expenses. You will need to think about how many children you plan to serve, as well as:

- tuition fees
- staffing costs
- start-up costs such as application/licensing fees, equipment, materials, marketing, food, cleaning products, and insurance
- other items or services you may need to purchase before your child care opens

One of your major expenses will be payroll and employee benefits. The minimum wage in Idaho in 2020 is \$7.25/hour. However, you should plan to budget for a competitive hourly rate for your employees in order to recruit and retain staff with education and experience in the child care field. For more information on competitive rates for your area, reach out to your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC).

The Provider Cost of Quality Calculator (PCQC) can help you estimate the annual cost and revenue of a child care center at different levels of quality. Find this tool at <https://www.ecequalitycalculator.com/Login.aspx>.

You may also use the following budget worksheet to help you think through how much cash you expect to come into your business (revenue and support) compared to how much cash you expect to spend (expenses). You may be eligible for loans or grants to get you started. You can check with your regional CCRC to ask if there are opportunities available for start-up funds.



Explore Funding and Financing Opportunities

The most common sources of funding for child care include:

- The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a food reimbursement program that allows qualified child care providers to be reimbursed for a portion of their child care food costs. Learn more about CACFP in Idaho and how to apply at <https://sde.idaho.gov/cnp/cacfp>.
- The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is a federally funded grant to states to support child care subsidies. In Idaho the child care subsidy program is called the Idaho Child Care Program, or ICCP. You can apply to participate in ICCP at the same time you apply for your license using your RISE account, but there are some additional requirements you will need to meet. Visit <https://idahostars.org/Child-Care-Providers/ICCP> for more information.

- The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) offers a wide variety of information on loans, grants and other financing opportunities for small businesses. Visit <https://www.sba.gov/funding-programs>.
- The Idaho state government offers a business resource website that includes a search wizard to help you locate banks and other loan resources in your local area. Visit <https://business.idaho.gov/resource-wizard>.

Most banks and some credit unions offer loans that can be used to purchase property and/or cover business start-up costs, equipment and supplies. To apply for a loan, one of the documents you will need to have prepared is a written business plan.

The following resources can help you learn how to create a business plan. You can also ask your regional CCRC for assistance in developing a business plan for your child care center.

- The Idaho Small Business Development Center (SBDC) offers free coaching, resources and trainings on business planning and development. Visit <https://idahosbdc.org>.
- The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) offers business plan templates and information at <https://www.sba.gov/business-guide/plan-your-business/write-your-business-plan>.

Be sure to check with your regional CCRC for ideas on other possible funding and financing opportunities to open or sustain your business.



RESOURCE 5: Budgeting Tool

Click [here](#) for an interactive budgeting tool that includes additional fields such as a budget builder for next year.

Revenue and Support

Revenue	Child Care Fees	
	Parents Pay (Tuition)	\$
	Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP)	\$
	Food Subsidy Program	\$
	Registration Fees (per child)	\$
	Activity Fees (per child)	\$
Support	Foundation and Corporate Grants	\$
	United Way	\$
	Contributions and Donations	\$
Other	Events and Fundraising	\$
	Interest	\$
	All Other	\$
	TOTAL INCOME	\$

Expenses

Personnel	Payroll	\$
	Payroll Taxes	\$
	Health Benefits	\$
	Other Benefits	\$
	Subtotal Personnel	\$
All Other Expenses	Food (per week per child)	\$
	Transportation	\$
	Child Care Supplies (per week per child)	\$
	Office Supplies	\$
	Utilities	\$
	Marketing and Promotions	\$
	Insurance: Business/Liability/Real Estate	\$
	Accounting/Legal	\$
	Repairs/Maintenance	\$
	Printing	\$
	Postage	\$
	Rent or Mortgage Interest	\$
	Dues and Subscriptions	\$
	Training/Education - Staff	\$
	Taxes/Licenses	\$
	Depreciation	\$
	Miscellaneous	\$
	TOTAL EXPENSES	\$
	NET SURPLUS (DEFICIT)	\$

Find a Location

You may already have a building or location in mind for your child care center, or you may still be searching for the right place. Either way, make sure that you have completed a community needs assessment (see [page 9](#)) to confirm that there is a need for child care in the area you are considering.

Additionally, certain factors may influence where you can locate your child care center. For example, if you decide to buy a franchise, the parent company may have specific guidelines regarding where you can locate your child care business. There may also be zoning laws or restrictive covenants that you will need to investigate to ensure that you are able to open a business in a certain location. Learn more below, and check with your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) to learn about the specific requirements in your area before you determine a location for your child care center.

Zoning Laws

Zoning laws may limit small businesses in your community. Zoning ordinances can set restrictions and charge fees for permits for the businesses that they do allow. Local governments pass zoning laws to make sure businesses fit in with the community. They are used to keep most business activities out of residential areas. These laws may affect where you can locate your child care center.

If zoning laws do not allow businesses where you plan to open your child care center, you cannot open a business unless you get an exception. This is true even if your child care center meets all state or local licensing requirements.

Check with your city or county Planning and Zoning office to get information about zoning regulations or call your regional CCRC for assistance in finding this information.

Restrictive Covenants and Homeowner Association Regulations

If you want to locate your child care business in a residential setting, check to see if there are any restrictive covenants before you rent or purchase the property. Housing developers can include restrictive covenants in deeds and Homeowner Association (HOA) agreements. These restrictive covenants may limit business activity in the community. The HOA will have information on any restrictions. If you rent your property, you will need to check with the property owner or the community's HOA about any rules.

If covenants do not allow businesses, you cannot open a business unless you get an exception. This is true even if a child care program meets all state or local licensing requirements.

Evaluate the Space

Once you have found the right location, you need to evaluate the space surrounding your location to make sure it is suitable for child care. Check with your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) and the Idaho Daycare Licensing Program for more information, and consult the IdahoSTARS Property Checklist: https://idahostars.org/portals/61/Docs/Providers/CCHC/CSP_PropertyChecklist.pdf.

RESOURCE 6: Finding a Location

Once you have completed a needs assessment and established that there is a need for child care in your community, you can begin the process of selecting a location for your center. If you are considering building, purchasing or renting a space for your child care business, think about establishing your business in an area where families live or along their route to work. You may also want to contact a local realtor who can help you locate properties that would be suitable for a child care center business.

- 1.** I have completed the needs assessment and identified the best location for my child care business based on the most recent data available to me.
Yes No

- 2.** I checked with my state or local licensing office and asked about any building or structural requirements for child care centers.
Yes No

- 3.** I checked local zoning laws to make sure I can open a business in this area.
Yes No

- 4.** I checked neighborhood covenants and Homeowner Association (HOA) covenants to make sure I can open a business in this area. This will apply if you are planning on opening a child care center in a residential area.
Yes No

- 5.** I checked with my regional Child Care Resource Center to see if I need a business license to operate a child care center in my area.
Yes No

- 6.** If I am renting a space, I checked with the lease agreement to make sure that I can operate a child care business in the rental property.
Yes No

If you have not checked “Yes” to the questions above, please take the time to find out the state or local licensing requirements for child care centers, zoning laws and restrictive covenants before you go any further.

RESOURCE 7: Evaluate Your Space

The following questions can be used as a guide to help you think about the space you are considering for your child care center. This is NOT a licensing compliance checklist. Check with Idaho Daycare Licensing and your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) regarding specific requirements that you will need to follow.

Structural Questions	Yes	No
Have you reviewed the Idaho licensing regulations or your local licensing regulations regarding structural requirements for a child care center?		
If you are renovating an existing space, have you checked state or local licensing requirements regarding needed updates?		
Have you checked your state or local licensing regulations to make sure you can legally operate the child care program on the level of the building you wish to operate? (Some areas may have restrictions on whether the child care can be located on an upper or lower level of a building.)		
Are there at least two exits on your ground floor that lead to the outside?		
Does the space have handwashing and toileting areas in the rooms occupied by the children?		
Is there sufficient storage and janitorial space that are not accessible to children?		
Does the center have space for staff to take a break away from the children?		
Is there adequate parking for parents and staff?		
Are parents easily able to enter and exit the parking lot?		
Does the space have an adequate kitchen to meet the size of the program planned and does the kitchen meet required licensing and health standards?		
Does the kitchen meet fire safety standards?		

RESOURCE 7: Evaluate Your Space

Physical Space	Yes	No
Have you reviewed your state or local licensing regulations to learn about the indoor and outdoor space requirements for child care centers?		
Have you reviewed state or local child care licensing requirements to learn how many square feet are required per child indoors and outdoors? Does your space meet these requirements?		
Is there enough space for each child to move freely? A minimum recommendation is 35 square feet of usable space per child.		
Will you have a separate space (not shared) for each child's personal belongings?		
Will you have a space that you can designate for children who become ill and need to be isolated until they can be picked up by a parent or guardian?		
Can you maintain adequate air flow and a comfortable room temperature in all weather conditions?		
Are you able to keep your hot water heater at no more than 120 degrees Fahrenheit so that children are safe from being scalded with hot water?		
Is the physical layout of the facility arranged so caregivers can view all areas at all times?		
Will you have places for children to play, rest and eat?		
Is there room for storage of cleaning supplies, staff belongings and additional items where they are not accessible to children?		
Do you have a safe outdoor play space, or is there a playground nearby that you will be allowed to use? Check with your state or local licensing agency to determine what constitutes an outdoor play area for child care centers.		
Is the surface under outdoor play equipment soft and free from dangerous objects to prevent injury?		
Is there a fence or natural barrier around your outdoor play space?		
If you have a swimming pool, is there a locked fence around it that meets the height required by your state or local area?		
Have you checked the area surrounding your child care center for potential water safety hazards (lakes, ponds, creeks, fountains, etc.) and consulted your state or local licensing agency regarding safety protocols?		

RESOURCE 7: Evaluate Your Space

Health and Safety	Yes	No
If you rent or purchase an older building (built before 1975), has it been tested for lead, asbestos or other toxic materials? (Your community health department or child care licensing agency can refer you to experts who can take samples of paint and other materials for testing.)		
Is the air quality in and around the child care center adequate?		
Is the source for drinking water regularly tested, and does it meet required health standards?		
Is the child care center located in an area away from gas stations where there are underground or above ground gas/oil storage tanks?		
Is the child care center located away from other known environmental hazards?		
Have you been in contact with your local fire station or other state fire officials to learn about local fire safety rules ?		
Have you reviewed the Americans with Disabilities Act to make sure you understand how to plan an accessible design?		



Develop Policies and Procedures

It is important to outline policies and procedures for operating your child care business for your employees and families. These will include important topics designed to help your business run smoothly. Your policies and procedures should reflect the Code of Ethical Conduct for the early childhood field:

<https://www.naeyc.org/resources/position-statements/ethical-conduct>

Staff/Team Handbook

The staff handbook outlines the expectations you have for your employees. If you want your staff handbook to be a binding agreement between you and your employee(s), make sure you review it with each staff member. Consider having them sign a document stating they read and understand the contents. The following topics are often included in staff handbooks:

- Mission and philosophy of your program
- Benefits and pay scale
- Job descriptions, evaluation procedures, hiring and termination policies
- Information on child abuse prevention, identification and requirements for reporting
- Child behavior and guidance policies
- Health and safety procedures
- Family communication and engagement
- Professional development requirements
- Sick leave policy and/or absences due to illness



RESOURCE 8: Staff Handbook Template

Below are some items that are typically included in a staff handbook for you to use as a guide. If you plan to use this handbook as a binding agreement with your employees, consider having someone with Human Resource experience review the handbook to ensure there are no legal issues. Also keep in mind that it is not just the employee agreeing to these policies; you will also be required to make sure that you follow and enforce the guidelines in the handbook.

Welcome and Introduction

- Welcome letter
- History of your child care business
- Mission
- Philosophy

Employment Policies

- Equal opportunity
- Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and reasonable accommodations
- Commitment to diversity
- Harassment and complaint procedure
- Consensual relationships

Conflict of Interest Policy

Confidentiality Policy

Personal Conduct and Performance

- Collaboration
- Performance management
- Whistleblowing protection
- Child abuse reporting

Employment Relationship

- Employment classification
- Work week and hours of work
- Job responsibilities
- Time records
- Overtime
- Compensation
- Payroll deductions and garnishments
- Access to personnel files
- Promotions
- Professional development
- Employment of relatives
- Separation from employment

Workplace Safety

- Drug-free workplace
- Smoke-free workplace
- Background screenings
- Workplace violence prevention
- Commitment to health and safety
- Emergency procedures
- Infectious disease response plan
- Risk management plan and precautions

Workplace Guidelines

- Attendance
- Outside employment
- Dress and grooming
- Acceptable social media use
- Computers, internet, email and other resources

Time Off and Leaves of Absence

- Holidays
- Paid time off
- Family and medical leave
- Military leave
- Bereavement leave
- Jury duty/Court appearance
- Worker's compensation

Employee Benefits

- Medical, dental, vision insurance
- Group life insurance
- Health Savings Account (HSA)
- Flexible Spending Account (FSA)
- Retirement plan
- Short-term/Long-term disability
- Consolidate Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA)
- Tuition reimbursement
- Child care discount

Family Handbook

The family handbook outlines your program's policies and procedures and includes other important information for families. Your local area may require you to have certain written policies available to families. Check with your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) to find out what is required in your area.

Whether or not it is required, it is strongly encouraged to provide a family handbook to help families learn about your program and shape their expectations. Encourage families to read the handbook and ask questions. Family handbooks often include the following topics:

- Mission and philosophy of your program
- Description of your program, including your operating hours and the ages of children you serve
- Information on whether your program is part of your state's Quality Rating and Improvement System (Idaho's Steps to Quality program) or nationally accredited
- Information on when payment is due and a policy regarding late payments
- Description of the curriculum and daily schedule for children
- Description of family engagement activities
- Required forms for families to complete such as the registration form, health forms, medication administration forms, emergency contact information and field trip permission forms
- Information on policies regarding communication with families, guidance and discipline, drop-off and pick-up procedures, emergency closings, fee and payment arrangements, food and nutrition, program closings, health policies (including when a child is required to be excluded from care due to illness) and transportation policies
- Description of your disaster and emergency plans



RESOURCE 9: Family Handbook Template

Below are some items that are typically included in a family handbook to use as an outline as you create your own.

Welcome

Center Information

- Contact information/Chain of command
- Mission statement and philosophy
- Hours of operation
- Attendance policy
- Holiday closure schedule

Curriculum Approach

Registration and Fees

- Enrollment policy
- Enrollment procedure
- Fee policies and procedures
- Activity/Special program fees
- Late tuition fees and late pick-up fees
- Returned checks
- Absence and vacation time
- Sibling discount

Center Activities and Routines

- Daily schedule, by age groupings
- Special program activities
- Nap time schedule/policy
- Weather policy
- Spare clothing

Emergency Preparedness

- Emergency drills (fire, tornado, earthquake, etc.)
- Emergency evacuation procedures
- Emergency medical procedures
- Utility interruption
- Infectious disease response plan
- Fee policy for temporary emergency closure

Health, Safety, and Nutrition

- Safe sleep policies
- Breastfeeding support
- Immunization records
- Physical examinations
- Illness
- Contagious illness/Exclusion from child care
- Medication policy
- Nutrition/Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)
- Sample menus
- Food allergies/Special food issues
- Preventing child abuse and neglect
- Safety/Security of center

General Policy Information

- Confidentiality policy
- Inclusion policy
- Positive guidance policy
- Building safety procedures
- Termination of services

Family Engagement

- Open door policy
- Family-teacher conferences
- Communication
- Family resources
- Family workshops and meetings/Family advisory council
- Volunteers

Forms

- Parent/Guardian agreement and acknowledgment of receipt of handbook
- Publicity release form (to use photos of children in promotional material)

Recruit and Hire Staff

Idaho law defines a child care staff member as a “person who is sixteen (16) years of age or older and employed by a daycare owner or operator to provide care and supervision at a daycare facility.” Your city or county may have additional age or education requirements for staff members in your center. It is important to contact your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) or the Idaho Daycare Licensing Program to understand the minimum qualifications needed to be a child care provider.

Determine Staff Positions Needed

The staff you will need depends on a variety of factors. While you will certainly need a director (and possibly an assistant director) and caregivers/teachers, you may also need to hire or contract with other staff who can perform non-caregiving duties.

The minimum number of staff you need depends on the ages and number of children in your program. Staff to child ratio is the number of staff needed for a specific number of children. Idaho uses a points system for child care ratio regulations. The points system is as follows:

Each caregiver should have no more than 12 points in their care. Children of different ages count as a certain number of points. The points are assigned as follows:



Each child under
24 months



Each child
24 to under 36 months



Each child
36 months to
under 5 years



Each child
5 to 13 years

You will also need to consider the number of usable square feet in your program, which will tell you how many children you can have in your program. This will help you to determine the maximum number of children you should enroll in each classroom (also called group size). Keep in mind that you may have a maximum number of children allowed in your program, but you may also choose to keep group sizes smaller in order to help child care staff provide responsive and nurturing care.

Idaho AEYC Recommendations* for Responsive and Nurturing Caregiving

Age of Child	Number of Children per Adult	Maximum Group Size
Infant: birth – 12 months	2	6 children
Young Toddler: 13 – 24 months	2 to 3	8 children
Older Toddler: 25 – 36 months	3 to 4	12 children
Preschool: 3 – 4 years	6 to 8	15 children
Pre-K: 4 – 5 years	8 to 10	18 children

**Idaho AEYC adaptations based on national recommendations*

American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. CFOC Standards Online Database. Aurora, CO; National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education; 2020. <https://nrckids.org/CFOC/Database/1.1.1.2>.

According to Idaho licensing regulations, you may choose to allow larger group sizes for some age groups than what is listed. Your local area may also have different ratio requirements. Check with your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) to learn more about specific ratio and group size requirements in your area.

Develop staffing patterns that meet licensing requirements to ensure that you always have enough staff available. You may not need all caregivers/teachers on site during opening and closing hours, and you should account for meal and other breaks for staff. Ask your CCRC what the requirements are in terms of how many staff are required on site at any time, and ensure that your staffing plan meets or exceeds those requirements.

In addition to caregiver positions, you may need to hire or contract staff for other day-to-day operations. For example, determine if you will need a cook, a driver, a custodian or someone to perform maintenance or other tasks for your program. Think about how many hours a week each job would require.

Depending on your skill set or those of your director and teachers, you may also need to hire or contract with a person or people with expertise necessary to run your business. This may include an accountant, a lawyer, a graphic designer or other professionals. Think through all these things, and determine if you would need someone to perform full-time, part-time or contractual work.

Decide on Position Qualifications

Check with your regional Child Care Resource Center to ensure that you know the minimum qualifications for child care staff in your area. Generally, these requirements for staff in Idaho include:

- Minimum age – 18 years for license holder, 16 years for staff
- Education requirement – Idaho does not have a minimum education requirement, but check with your CCRC for local standards
- Ongoing training – four hours every 12 months from the date of hire (2020 requirements for minimum licensing standards)

You will need to ensure that you always have at least one staff member on site who is currently certified in pediatric rescue breathing, infant-child CPR and first aid treatment. You may consider including this in your job descriptions or you may ensure that applicants are willing to become certified before beginning work. (Keep in mind that online programs are not acceptable unless there is a hands-on skills test in front of a live instructor.)

Once you know the minimum qualifications required for caregivers in your area, decide if you would like your staff to have any other qualifications above and beyond the requirements. See *Staff Training Options and Opportunities* (below) for more information about what you may choose to require. Determine if you would like your staff to have a minimum number of years of experience caring for children, speak a certain language or possess other specific skills necessary to carry out their responsibilities at your center.

Develop Position Roles and Responsibilities

Think through what each position should entail. Develop position descriptions that include qualifications, roles and responsibilities. This will be helpful in recruiting, as you can post the job description information on job websites for applicants to respond, as well as sharing expectations for what a position will involve once a hire is made.

Staff Training Options and Opportunities

You may want your staff to have or earn additional qualifications in order to work with children. Child Care Aware® of America recommends all child care center staff have **at least 40 hours of initial training**, including CPR, first aid and other basic safety and health training, and training on child development, as well as **24 hours of annual training**. You may want to look at training sessions available through your local CCRC and local colleges/universities if you or your staff are interested in or need to earn additional training hours.

You may also want to think about requiring staff to have a degree or credential in the early childhood field. One option is the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential. The CDA is a nationally accepted early childhood credential awarded by the Council for Professional Recognition (<https://www.cdacouncil.org/credentials/apply-for-cda>). There are different options to earn a CDA credential, including taking classes with an instructor or online.

Market Your Program

Developing a marketing plan will help you think about why families should choose your program. A marketing plan also gives your program a sense of identity or brand. Contact your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) for support with your marketing plan.

Know Your Mission, Values, and Program Philosophy

Think about what makes your program unique and how it can meet the needs of children and families. What benefits beyond the hours of operation and the ages of children you plan to serve will you offer to families? What does your program believe that makes it a great choice for children and families? Create a mission statement and program philosophy that reflect your programs values, priorities, and goals.

Understand the Child Care Market

Use your findings from the needs assessment to help you answer questions about the need for child care in your area, what age groups might need care, and where families live and work.

Know Your Community

It is important to know who else is providing child care services in your area. You may want to visit other child care programs to get a sense of what they offer to children and families. Use the Community Child Care Analysis ([page 49](#)) to help you compare other programs in your area.

Determine Your Audience

Consider all the ways you can reach families in your community. Think about where families are likely to look for information and reach out to other businesses to get the word out about your program. Also think about what

type of families would benefit most from your program. Ask your regional CCRC for help in reaching your target audience.

Develop Marketing Strategies

Think about the different strategies you can use to attract families to your program. You may want to create a logo or a sign in front of your child care business for prospective parents, design a website, develop a social media presence and distribute brochures/flyers about your program. Whatever strategies you develop, think about the budget you may need for each strategy.

Set Objectives

You will need to be able to evaluate your plan to know what types of strategies work for you. Before putting a strategy into practice, decide what your goal is and when you will revisit the strategy to see if it is successful or should be adjusted.

Create a Communication Plan

Your marketing plan should highlight the unique aspects of your program, including your strategies to attract families to your program, and your marketing budget. Be sure that your plan includes steps, budget line items and timelines for both the creation and distribution of your marketing materials. It is helpful to market your program whether you are just opening or if you have been open for years.

RESOURCE 10: Marketing Plan Template

1. Program Mission and Philosophy

Your mission defines what you do and sets the goals for your child care program. Your philosophy expands upon your mission statement and explains common beliefs, ideas and values that will allow you to reach your goals.

Think about what makes your child care program unique from other programs in your community. Your program mission should be two to three sentences long and your philosophy can be longer (three or four principles), but it should remain simple. Write your program mission and philosophy.

2. Market Analysis

What are the demographics of the families in the area where you want to open your child care business?

Is there a need for another child care program because of shifting demographics or new employers moving into the area?

What are the child care needs in your area?

Use information from the needs assessment ([page 9](#)) to help you complete this.

3. Community Child Care Analysis

What other child care programs are in the same area as your program?

You may want to look at different types of programs, such as other licensed child care centers, family child care homes, community center programs and other types of child care in your community. When you have an idea of the different types of programs in your area, you may be better able to define your program's strengths and opportunities for growth.

RESOURCE 10: Marketing Plan Template

4. Target Your Audience

What audiences do you want to reach?

Is your child care business located near a major employer?

What type of families do you want to attract to your child care center?

Are you interested in serving children who are dual language learners or children with special needs?

5. Develop Strategies

Do you have a logo to identify your program to prospective families?

Do you have a website, and will you be able to keep it up-to-date?

What strategies will you use to draw families to your program?

Will you use social media or printed materials?

What steps do you need to take, and how much money will it cost to implement your strategies?

Use the marketing strategies and budget ([page 48](#)) to help you think through these steps. Be as specific as you can be as you develop marketing strategies.

6. Set Objectives

How will you know if your marketing plan is successful?

Set benchmarks for your marketing objectives so you know what types of marketing strategies work for you.

RESOURCE 11: Marketing Strategies and Budget – Sample

The information below is designed to serve as an example of how you might complete this resource. Fill in your own strategies, people responsible, timeframes and budget information according to your needs.

Marketing Strategy	Person Responsible	Start Date-End Date	Budget

RESOURCE 12: Community Child Care Analysis

		My Child Care Business	Child Care #1	Child Care #2	Child Care #3
Program Name					
Street Address					
Website Address					
Days and Hours of Operation					
Tuition	Infants:	\$	\$	\$	\$
	Toddlers:	\$	\$	\$	\$
	Preschool:	\$	\$	\$	\$
	Pre-K:	\$	\$	\$	\$
	School-Age:	\$	\$	\$	\$
Quality Ratings: <i>Does the program participate in Idaho's Steps to Quality? What is their rating?</i>					
Appearance: <i>Are the space and materials/toys clean and well maintained? Do you see any health or safety hazards?</i>					
Equipment and Toys: <i>Are there age-appropriate outdoor and indoor toys?</i>					

RESOURCE 12: Community Child Care Analysis

	My Child Care Business	Child Care #1	Child Care #2	Child Care #3
Child Interactions: <i>Do the program staff interact well with the children?</i>				
Adult Interactions: <i>Are staff helpful and friendly to parents and to each other?</i>				
Environment: <i>Does the program have an age-appropriate schedule with time for child-directed learning experiences, play time and quiet time?</i>				
Family Engagement: <i>What does the program do to engage families?</i>				
Notes: <i>What aspects of this program make it unique?</i>				



Operating a Successful Child Care Program

Once you open your child care center, you will want to ensure that your program structure and practices provide a high-quality learning experience for children. Your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) can help improve the quality of your program through training, coaching, and connecting you to additional resources and supports.

The program structure elements below will help you consider what kinds of supports and policies to put into place to ensure that your center has the foundation to be successful. The discussion about program practices will address the curriculum, materials, resources and daily interactions you and your staff have with the children and families in your care.



Program Structure



Topics in this section:

- 53** Licensing and Regulatory Requirements
- 53** Health and Nutrition
- 53** Supervision and Safety
- 53** Staffing
- 54** Operating Hours
- 54** Policies and Procedures
- 54** Child Care Assistance
- 54** Steps to Quality
- 55** National Accreditation

Licensing and Regulatory Requirements

By this point in your journey, you will have already determined if you are required to pursue a state, city or county child care license. Obtaining your license is only the first step, however. Even after you are officially licensed and providing child care, you should stay up-to-date on licensing news and keep in touch with licensing agents to ask any questions that arise. Ensure that you and your staff are current on licensing regulations and that your program is following the requirements set by Idaho and/or your city or county for safe and healthy child care.

Be sure to save the Idaho Daycare Licensing web page for future reference (<https://healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/providers/child-care-providers/becoming-child-care-provider>) and ensure that you have the contact information for your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC). You may also call 2-1-1 and ask to speak with a Customer Support Specialist about your child care licensing questions.

Health and Nutrition

There are several things you can do to help children receive healthy and nutritious food throughout the day and integrate quality health practices in your child care program.

If you will be serving meals to the children in your program, consider the following:

- The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) is a voluntary program that helps qualified child care providers serve healthy and nutritious meals and snacks for children in their care. CACFP reimburses child care providers for a portion of the costs for eligible meals and snacks served, depending on the income status of the families.

- If serving hot meals on-site, it is your responsibility to contact the local health department to get the required permits.

Regardless of whether you will be providing/preparing food for children's meals and snacks, there are other health and nutrition practices that you will want to implement. Practices such as record keeping, special infant and toddler feeding practices, proper handwashing, diapering and toileting procedures are all important elements of a high-quality program. Many of these practices may be required by your state or local licensing regulations.

Supervision and Safety

Supervision and safety practices are some of the most important features of your program. Not only do these practices keep children safe, but they also help you provide higher quality care. Many of these practices may be required by your state or local licensing office. When programs are properly staffed and when staff actively supervise children at all times, it is more likely that staff can engage in warm and responsive interactions with children.

Staffing Practices

It is important to have the adequate number of staff for your program, and it is also important to have staff that have an early childhood education background and experience working with young children. Use the following resource to help you think about what type of training and education you and your staff may need to operate a high-quality child care program.

Operating Hours

Determine what type of child care scheduling needs you want your business to be able to meet. You should review the results of your community needs assessment and consider the questions listed below. This information will help you determine your hours of operation.

- Do you hope to fill a need for traditional child care hours (work- or school-day hours), or is your goal to offer care during non-traditional hours, such as weekends, early mornings, late evenings or overnight?
- What do families in your area need in terms of child care schedules?
- Do you have many families in your community that perform shift work?
- What times will you need to open and close in order to accommodate the typical work or school hours for families in your area?



Make sure that the number of staff you will have can cover the hours of operation without working overtime hours.

Child Care Policies and Procedures

Your child care policies and procedures will help you communicate your expectations to families and staff. These policies will help you when questions arise. Some of these policies and procedures may be required by your state or local licensing agency.

Child Care Assistance – Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP)

Families in your area may be eligible to receive child care subsidy through the Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP). Each family will need to go through an application process to determine eligibility. Your child care program will also need to apply and be approved for ICCP to receive these funds for eligible families. You may apply for ICCP at the same time you apply for your child care license through your IdahoSTARS RISE account.

Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) – Steps to Quality

Quality Rating and Improvement Systems, or QRIS, are designed to help child care programs assess, improve and communicate their levels of quality to the public. Idaho's QRIS is called Steps to Quality, and it is voluntary for child care centers. Participation in Steps to Quality is beneficial for programs, as it helps to improve the quality of care and education offered to young children and it demonstrates a commitment to excellence.

Child care programs that participate in Steps to Quality earn ratings by meeting certain quality standards. Programs earn higher ratings as they meet more quality standards. Standards cover areas such as:

- Health and safety
- Staff education
- Classrooms and playground
- Inclusion of all children
- Partnerships with families and communities
- Professional business practices

Participating child care centers work with regional Quality Consultants to assess their current quality levels and to build upon and improve the quality of their care. Program ratings are shared with families across Idaho as a way of recognizing the success and commitment to quality and as a benefit to participating programs.

To learn more about how your center can participate in Steps to Quality, visit <https://idahostars.org/Child-Care-Providers/Steps-to-Quality> or contact your regional CCRC.

National Accreditation

Some child care programs reach higher levels of quality by becoming accredited by a national accrediting organization. Similar to Steps to Quality, becoming nationally accredited is a voluntary process for child care providers. The accreditation process helps programs improve the quality of their care and education of young children and allows them

to demonstrate and communicate a commitment to quality. Programs that choose to become accredited must show that they meet requirements above and beyond Idaho's state licensing requirements.

Some of the accreditation organizations for licensed child care centers are:

- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) - <https://www.naeyc.org/accreditation/early-learning-program-accreditation>
- National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA) - <https://necpa.net/page/the-necpa-choice>
- National Accreditation Commission (NAC) - <https://www.earlylearningleaders.org/accreditation/accreditation-overview>
- Cognia - <https://www.cognia.org/services/accreditation-certification>

To learn more about the process, costs and standards associated with national accreditation, visit the websites above or contact your regional CCRC.



RESOURCE 13: Child Care Center Program Structure

A successful child care center depends on many factors. Understanding practices and resources that can strengthen your program structure is one way to work toward the success of your business. The topics below can help you think about how to establish a strong structure for your child care center.

Not all of these are specific licensing requirements. Many are best practices for creating a quality program. Best practices often go above and beyond regular licensing requirements.

Licensing

Indicator	Response		Ways To Increase Quality
The child care center is licensed by the state (and/or the city/county, if applicable).	Yes	No	
All staff are familiar with the licensing requirements.	Yes	No	
The program completes daily checks to ensure all licensing requirements are being met.	Yes	No	

QRIS and National Accreditation

Indicator	Response		Ways To Increase Quality
The child care program is enrolled in Idaho's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), Steps to Quality, and we are working on achieving higher levels of quality.	Yes	No	
I have researched what the program needs to do to become nationally accredited.	Yes	No	

RESOURCE 13: Child Care Center Program Structure

Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP)

Indicator	Response		Ways To Increase Quality
The program has applied to receive funds from the Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP).	Yes	No	
There is a plan in place for how attendance records and changes will be submitted to the ICCP.	Yes	No	

Health and Nutrition Practices

Indicator	Response		Ways To Increase Quality
The program is enrolled in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).	Yes	No	
If the program is not enrolled in the CACFP, the food served to children meets nutritional standards.	Yes	No	
The program has a plan in place if a child has food allergies or dietary restrictions.	Yes	No	
If hot meals are being served, the program has contacted the local Health Department to get the required permits.	Yes	No	
Program records show that the children enrolled are up-to-date on all required immunizations.	Yes	No	

RESOURCE 13: Child Care Center Program Structure

Health and Nutrition Practices CONTINUED

Indicator	Response	Ways To Increase Quality
Handwashing is a regular part of the program's practices for both the providers and children, especially before eating and after using the bathroom.	Yes No	
Health and Nutrition Practices for Infants and Toddlers		
The place where diapers are changed is clean.	Yes No	
Caregivers always keep a hand on the child while diapering.	Yes No	
Caregivers remove the soiled diaper without dirtying any surface not already in contact with stool or urine.	Yes No	
Caregivers clean and sanitize the surface after finishing the changing process. Hands are scrubbed with soap and warm running water for at least 20 seconds and then rinsed and dried. The water faucet is turned off with a paper towel.	Yes No	
Infants are fed on demand.	Yes No	
Breastmilk is labeled with name and date and stored appropriately.	Yes No	
There is a place where mothers can comfortably breastfeed their child.	Yes No	
New foods are introduced to infants and toddlers appropriately.	Yes No	

RESOURCE 13: Child Care Center Program Structure

Supervision and Safety Practices

Indicator	Response		Ways To Increase Quality
<p>The program follows Idaho AEYC recommendations regarding ratio and group size.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0-12 months: 2 children per caregiver, max group size of 6 children • 13-24 months: 2-3 children per caregiver, max group size of 8 children • 25-36 months: 3-4 children per caregiver, max group size of 12 children • 3- to 4-year-olds: 6-8 children per caregiver, max group size of 15 children • 4- to 5-year-olds: 8-10 children per caregiver, max group size of 18 children 	Yes	No	
<p>The program follows the state licensing points system for ratio.</p> <p>Each caregiver should have no more than 12 points in their care:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each child under 24 months is 2 points • Children ages 24-36 months are 1.5 points each • Children ages 36 months to under 5 years are 1 point each • Children ages 5-13 years are 0.5 point each 	Yes	No	
Supervision of Children			
<p>Children are actively supervised at all times, both indoors and outdoors, even when they are sleeping.</p>	Yes	No	
<p>All staff have completed comprehensive background checks.</p>	Yes	No	
<p>All staff have been trained on how to prevent, recognize and report signs of child abuse.</p>	Yes	No	

RESOURCE 13: Child Care Center Program Structure

Supervision and Safety Practices CONTINUED

Indicator	Response		Ways To Increase Quality
Infant and Toddler Safe Sleep Practices			
Infants are put to sleep on their backs.	Yes	No	
The infant sleep spaces consist of a firm sleep surface, such as a mattress in a crib, covered by a fitted sheet with no other bedding or pillows.	Yes	No	
The infant sleep spaces are kept free of soft objects, toys, crib bumpers and loose bedding.	Yes	No	
All child care staff, volunteers and substitutes are trained on safe sleep practices to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).	Yes	No	
All infants have their own designated sleep space that is the same every day.	Yes	No	
During rest time, staff can see and hear infants and toddlers at all times.	Yes	No	
Staff regularly checks on infants and toddlers when they are sleeping.	Yes	No	
Safe infant sleep practices are posted in the infant sleeping area as a reminder to all staff, volunteers and substitutes.	Yes	No	
When infants are physically able to roll over, there is a sign posted by their bed indicating that the child can roll.	Yes	No	
Safety			
The indoor and outdoor environment is clear of safety hazards, such as cleaning supplies and tripping hazards.	Yes	No	
The child care center has been inspected for radon, lead and asbestos.	Yes	No	

RESOURCE 13: Child Care Center Program Structure

Supervision and Safety Practices CONTINUED

Indicator	Response		Ways To Increase Quality
Toys are clean, safe and within reach of children.	Yes	No	
If the program provides transportation, it is safe and reliable. All drivers are licensed and insured, and children are properly restrained in the appropriate car safety seat for their weight and age.	Yes	No	
There are clear check-in and check-out procedures.	Yes	No	
Safety for Infants and Toddlers			
Caregivers are trained in infant-child CPR and pediatric rescue breathing and their certifications are current.	Yes	No	
Infants and toddlers are within sight and sound at all times.	Yes	No	
Outlets are covered/protected.	Yes	No	
Emergency Plans and Drills			
The program has a plan in place in case of an emergency or disaster, like a fire, tornado, flood, blizzard, earthquake, hurricane or active shooter.	Yes	No	
The program practices safety drills once every month.	Yes	No	
The program has an emergency plan in case a child is injured, sick or lost.	Yes	No	
The program has information about who to contact in an emergency.	Yes	No	
First Aid and Medication			
All staff have been trained in CPR and first aid and certifications are current.	Yes	No	

RESOURCE 13: Child Care Center Program Structure

Supervision and Safety Practices CONTINUED

Indicator	Response		Ways To Increase Quality
The program has first aid kits that are regularly re-stocked.	Yes	No	
All medications are kept in their original containers and out of the reach of children.	Yes	No	
Medications are labeled and accompanied by the proper documentation and instruction for administration.	Yes	No	
Staff have been trained and certified in the administration of medication.	Yes	No	

Staffing Practices

Indicator	Response		Ways To Increase Quality
The center management staff have a bachelor's degree in an early childhood related field.	Yes	No	
The center management staff have worked in child care for at least one year.	Yes	No	
Teachers plan lessons and experiences for the children that help them learn and grow.	Yes	No	
Teaching staff understand what children need to learn and grow.	Yes	No	
Teaching staff have an associate or bachelor's degree or credentials in an early childhood related field.	Yes	No	
Teaching staff, including the director, participate in ongoing training or continuing education programs.	Yes	No	

RESOURCE 13: Child Care Center Program Structure

Operating Hours

Indicator	Response		Ways To Increase Quality
The program has operating hours that meet the needs of families in their community.	Yes	No	
The program has enough staff to cover current operating hours without working overtime hours.	Yes	No	

Child Care Policies and Procedures

Indicator	Response		Ways To Increase Quality
The program provides a written service agreement before families enroll their child in the program.	Yes	No	
The program provides a copy of the family handbook and reviews it with the family prior to enrollment.	Yes	No	
The program clearly outlines the cost of care, field trip or special program fees, and any other fees.	Yes	No	
The program has a policy regarding drop-off and pick-up times, including who can pick up children. If late pick-up fees are charged when parents are late, that information is clearly shared with families.	Yes	No	
The program has a policy for times when it may close, such as for certain holidays, inclement weather or in case of emergencies.	Yes	No	

RESOURCE 13: Child Care Center Program Structure

Child Care Policies and Procedures CONTINUED

Indicator	Response		Ways To Increase Quality
The program has a policy regarding when children should stay home due to illness. This policy includes when children will be sent home due to illness.	Yes	No	
The program has a policy regarding termination of a family's child care service agreement that outlines clear expectations, communication and procedures.	Yes	No	
The program has a written policy and procedures for when staff are allowed to give medications.	Yes	No	
The program has a written supervision policy or plan that ensures children are supervised at all times.	Yes	No	
The program provides a written guidance and discipline policy to families.	Yes	No	



Program Practices



Topics in this section:

- 66** Developmentally Appropriate Practice
- 66** Curriculum
- 66** Family Engagement
- 66** Community Involvement
- 66** Caregiver-Child Interactions
- 66** Indoor Environment
- 66** Outdoor Environment

Developmentally Appropriate Practice

When designing your child care program for quality, you will want to incorporate practices that are developmentally appropriate for the children in your care. Using developmentally appropriate practices, or DAP, means designing an appropriate learning environment and experiences for children based on knowledge about how they learn and grow. Your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) can help you with training and resources to incorporate DAP into your child care program.

Curriculum

Your curriculum is your plan or description of how you will provide opportunities for young children to learn and practice skills that are appropriate for their ages and developmental stages. Although there are many different curriculum systems available for you to purchase, make sure to choose a curriculum that includes a focus on each domain of development, aligns with your program's mission and philosophy and has a foundation based on Developmentally Appropriate Practice (DAP).

Family Engagement

Families are a key element in all child care programs. Building meaningful relationships with families shows you are a partner in their child's development. Your regional CCRC can help you develop and design family engagement opportunities for the families in your child care program.

Community Involvement

Building relationships in the community benefits child care programs, families and the community itself. Programs can build brand awareness and give back to their local area by participating in community events. Partnerships between child care and local organizations can also serve to support families and children more effectively.

Caregiver-Child Interactions

One of the most important features of your child care program will be how you and your staff interact with the children in your care. Use the resource below to think about how you and your staff can increase the quality of interactions with the children in your care.

Indoor Environment

Designing a high-quality indoor learning environment for children will require you to have a variety of learning centers and experiences for children of different ages and abilities. You also will want to think about your room layout and design and where you will put different learning centers. Your regional CCRC can help you plan a quality learning environment.

Outdoor Environment

Designing a high-quality outdoor environment and experiences for children should include equipment of the right size and type for the children you serve. There should be plenty of space for children to move about and experience the fresh air. There are many safety considerations you will need to think about to provide a quality outdoor learning environment. Many of these practices may be required by your state or local licensing agency.

RESOURCE 14: Child Care Center Program Practices

You can take steps toward providing a high-quality early care and education environment for the children in your program. Putting thought and intentional care into the following areas of your program will help you enhance program quality.

Developmentally Appropriate Practices

Indicator	Response		Ways To Increase Quality
Program staff are knowledgeable about typical ages and stages of children’s development.	Yes	No	
Program staff take the time to observe children in their play and develop learning opportunities that may interest them.	Yes	No	
The program has developmentally appropriate learning experiences for all children.	Yes	No	
The program plans learning experiences that meet each child’s developmental needs.	Yes	No	
The program plans learning experiences that are culturally and linguistically appropriate for children and that reflect their families and communities.	Yes	No	
The program plans for small group activities with children.	Yes	No	
The program provides opportunities for children to choose with whom they work and play.	Yes	No	
The program helps guide children’s learning experiences by providing support to them when they need assistance.	Yes	No	

RESOURCE 14: Child Care Center Program Practices

Curriculum

Indicator	Response		Ways To Increase Quality
The program uses an evidence-based curriculum that is developmentally appropriate.	Yes	No	
The curriculum addresses all major domains of development including:			
Language/Literacy	Yes	No	
Mathematics	Yes	No	
Science	Yes	No	
Social studies	Yes	No	
Social and emotional development	Yes	No	
Physical growth and development	Yes	No	
Motor development (gross and fine motor)	Yes	No	
Approaches to learning	Yes	No	
The curriculum helps teachers think about how to provide opportunities for children to practice different skills in each of the major domains.	Yes	No	
The curriculum has specific learning goals for children.	Yes	No	
The curriculum has well-designed learning activities.	Yes	No	
The curriculum emphasizes observing children's learning as a way of ongoing assessment.	Yes	No	
The curriculum allows teachers to individualize instruction.	Yes	No	
The curriculum has a family engagement component.	Yes	No	
The curriculum can be adapted for children with special needs.	Yes	No	
The curriculum is culturally and linguistically responsive to the families the program serves.	Yes	No	

RESOURCE 14: Child Care Center Program Practices

Family Engagement

Indicator	Response		Ways To Increase Quality
Staff share and talk to families about their child’s specific daily activities, either at drop-off or pick-up, and avoid generalizations such as labeling a child’s day as “good” or “bad.”	Yes	No	
The program incorporates technology as a communication tool and shares information with families on how to access it and how the information is kept secure.	Yes	No	
Families are encouraged to visit at any time.	Yes	No	
There are multiple ways for families to be involved in the program, and family ideas are incorporated into the program.	Yes	No	
There are regular opportunities (at least twice per year) where families can meet with the staff, share their child’s strengths, and hear how their child is developing skills.	Yes	No	
Staff often share observations and ongoing assessment information with families.	Yes	No	
Staff incorporate the family’s culture and values into the classroom.	Yes	No	

RESOURCE 14: Child Care Center Program Practices

Community Involvement

Indicator	Response		Ways To Increase Quality
The program has formed partnerships with local organizations.	Yes	No	
The program participates in community events such as fairs and volunteer opportunities.	Yes	No	
The program is aware of local services that support families and can refer families to those services as needed.	Yes	No	
The program encourages community involvement with families by hosting community events such as an open house or a culturally appropriate dinner.	Yes	No	

Caregiver-Child Interactions

Indicator	Response		Ways To Increase Quality
Children are comforted when needed through hugs, pats on the back, high fives and other ways of communicating connection and respect.	Yes	No	
Each child is warmly greeted when they arrive, and families feel encouraged when they leave for the day.	Yes	No	
Staff consistently talk with children and seem genuinely interested in what the children are doing.	Yes	No	
Staff routinely have back-and-forth conversations with each child every day.	Yes	No	
Staff routinely get down on children's level and speak with them.	Yes	No	

RESOURCE 14: Child Care Center Program Practices

Caregiver-Child Interactions CONTINUED

Indicator	Response		Ways To Increase Quality
Staff connect with children to help them solve problems rather than solving problems for them (unless it is a health and safety issue).	Yes	No	
Staff are nurturing with children and provide support rather than simply reacting to children's behavior.	Yes	No	
Staff encourage peer interactions with children who are of different ages and abilities. If infants are enrolled in the program, they routinely have an opportunity to interact with the older children.	Yes	No	

Indoor Environment

Indicator	Response		Ways To Increase Quality
There is enough room in the environment for children and adults to move around.	Yes	No	
There are different areas for resting, quiet play and active play.	Yes	No	
Materials are well-organized and on low shelves so children can reach them by themselves.	Yes	No	



RESOURCE 14: Child Care Center Program Practices

Indoor Environment CONTINUED

Indicator	Response		Ways To Increase Quality
The program provides the following interest centers:			
Book area	Yes	No	
Block play	Yes	No	
Sensory table (e.g., sand/water)	Yes	No	
Fine motor area	Yes	No	
Dramatic play	Yes	No	
Creative arts	Yes	No	
Music	Yes	No	
Writing area	Yes	No	
Large muscle activity area	Yes	No	
Space for children to relax quietly, away from the activity of the rest of the children	Yes	No	
There are enough toys and learning materials for the number of children enrolled in the program.	Yes	No	
The program rotates early learning materials based on interests of the children.	Yes	No	
Children do not watch television at the child care center.	Yes	No	
The program limits the use of screen time (TV, computers, tablets and other types of technology) with children.	Yes	No	
Cleanliness is evaluated and maintained throughout the day to remove potential health and safety risks and prevent the spread of germs.	Yes	No	

RESOURCE 14: Child Care Center Program Practices

Outdoor Environment

Indicator	Response		Ways To Increase Quality
The child drop-off and pick-up location is in an area that is safe and away from roads or other potentially dangerous areas.	Yes	No	
There is a space for outdoor play.	Yes	No	
The outdoor play area is easily accessible.	Yes	No	
The outdoor play area is fenced in.	Yes	No	
The fence does not have any sharp edges or points. There are no openings in the fence between 3.5 and 9 inches.	Yes	No	
The outdoor play area is regularly inspected.	Yes	No	
The outdoor area is clean and free from trash, rodents and poisonous plants.	Yes	No	
The equipment is the right size and type for the age of children who use it.	Yes	No	
There are tricycles, balls, hoops and other outdoor toys available for children to use.	Yes	No	
Pools and other water features (fountains, rivers, streams, etc.) are not accessible to children at any time unless direct adult supervision is provided.	Yes	No	
Learning materials such as creative art, nature/science, books, and more are available outdoors for the children.	Yes	No	
Children are taken outside on a regular basis.	Yes	No	
Children are actively supervised while outdoors.	Yes	No	

Training and Education Essentials

Idaho licensing requires that child care center owners, operators and staff members complete a minimum of four training hours annually (every 12 months after date of hire) on topics related to child development. City or county requirements may be different, so be sure to check with your regional Child Care Resource Center (CCRC) to ensure that you understand the training requirements in your area.

Child care programs that participate in the Idaho Child Care Program (ICCP) are also required to complete a series of free online courses that cover certain health and safety topics and they may be required to complete more than 4 hours of training each year. Visit <https://idahostars.org/Child-Care-Providers/ICCP#require> for more information.



While pediatric rescue breathing, CPR and first aid trainings do not count toward the required four hours for Idaho state licensing, it is recommended (and may be required in some local areas) that child care staff be certified in these life-saving measures, as well as Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) Prevention (required ICCP training), infant safe sleep practices, and child abuse and neglect prevention and reporting.

Ongoing training and professional development help reinforce best practices and help child care educators learn new information and skills. Some trainings may be in person or online, some may be more in-depth or offered over a period of time, and some may award certificates or a credential upon successful completion. Check to see if trainings offer continuing education units (CEUs) for a fee. This might help you or your staff earn credits toward a college degree.

Your regional CCRC has a list of required and ongoing training topics that you can take in person and online through your RISE account.

Education Essentials

Continuing your education can help you provide quality child care and is an important hallmark of high-quality programs. If you choose to have your program pursue national accreditation or participate in Steps to Quality (Idaho's QRIS), you or your staff may be required to have higher levels of education and engage in ongoing professional development to enhance education.

There are different ways you can continue your education in the early childhood field. Contact your regional CCRC to learn more about different programs in your area that can help you earn your Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, associate degree or bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development. You can also check with local and online colleges and universities that offer degree programs in child-related fields.



Pandemic Considerations

Certain areas of your child care program will need to operate differently during a public health pandemic such as COVID-19. During times of disease outbreaks, there are additional health and safety measures to put into place, practices and procedures that may change in order to better protect children and staff, additional supplies that you may need to budget for (including personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies, air filters, and more), and other considerations.

Contact your regional Child Care Resource Center to learn about any updated requirements or procedures that should be put in place during a public health pandemic or times of disease outbreaks (such as seasonal flu).

Additional Resources

- Guidance for Child Care Programs That Remain Open, from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html>
- Idaho COVID-19 Website: <https://coronavirus.idaho.gov>
- Child Care Aware® of America COVID-19 resources and technical assistance for child care programs: <https://www.childcareaware.org/emergency-child-care-technical-assistance-center/ta-for-child-care-providers>





Idaho Association for the Education of Young Children (IDAEYC) maintains the vision that all children will thrive wherever they grow and learn. The early years are a time of remarkable growth and development and create the foundation for all subsequent learning. Investments in quality care and early education provide opportunities that support optimal growth and development for all young children. The mission of IDAEYC is to advance Idaho's early learning profession and advocate for children, families, and those who work on behalf of young children.

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