

Family Child Care Home Requirements

Physical space

Your home must meet the following requirements:

- You must have a minimum of 35 square feet of usable indoor space for each child.
- The indoor air temperature must be at least 62 degrees Fahrenheit.
- There must be an allowance for air circulation to the furnace.
- The basement must be free of hazards.
- The residence must be free from accumulations of dirt, rubbish, or peeling paint.
- Effective measures must be taken to protect the home against mice and insects (vermin). Chemicals for insect and rodent control must not be applied in areas accessible to children while children are present.
- Indoor and outdoor garbage and rubbish containers must not be accessible to infants and toddlers.

Locks on doors

Children must be able to open closet doors from the inside of the closet. The bathroom door must be able to be unlocked from the outside. The key or other device used to unlock the bathroom door must be readily accessible to all caregivers. You cannot have an exit door that requires keys to open it from both the inside and outside.

Stairways

All stairways, both indoors and outdoors, with three or more steps must have handrails. They must also be enclosed by railings with narrow spacing that meets the State Building Code. Your licenser will help you determine if your home meets the code. The back of the stair risers must be enclosed. You will need to use a gate or barrier on your stairways when children between 6- and 18-months-old are in care. Stairways must be well lit, in good repair, and free of clutter or obstruction.

Toilets

Licensed homes must have toilet facilities and sewage disposal systems that conform to the State Building Code or local septic system ordinances. The toilets must flush thoroughly. Outdoor toilets are permissible when local ordinances allow.

Outdoor play space

There must be at least 50 square feet per child of outdoor play space. If your yard is too small, you can use a park, playground or play space if it is within 1,500 feet of your home.

Your licenser may require you to have a fence to provide protection from rail, traffic, water, or machinery.

The outdoor play space you use must be kept free of any litter, rubbish, toxic materials, water hazards, machinery, unlocked vehicles, human or animal waste, and sewage contaminants at all times during child care hours.

Decks

Decks, balconies, or lofts that are more than 30 inches above the ground must have a guard rail that is at least three feet tall to comply with State Building Code. Wood decks must be free of splinters and coated with wood preservative or paint, or constructed with treated wood.

Swimming pools or other bodies of water

Swimming and wading pools, beaches, or other bodies of water on or next to the site of the residence must be inaccessible to children except during periods of supervised use. Wading pools must be kept clean. When children use a swimming pool or a beach, you or another adult caregiver who is trained in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) must be present.

- If children use a swimming pool at your family child care program, you must develop an annual contract with their parent acknowledging the use of a swimming pool.
- If children in your child care program use a wading or swimming pool, you must complete forms, which can be found on the [DHS Licensed family child care webpage](#).

Fire code

Exits, doors, and windows

Each room where children sleep and basements used for care must have two escape routes. One exit must be a stairway or door that leads to a floor of discharge. For example, if you are in the basement, one exit must be a stairway that leads to a floor in the home that leads outdoors. The second exit must be a door or window that leads directly outside.

The law has specific requirements for the window size and distance from the floor, which your licenser will cover with you.

When there is an attached garage, the door from the garage to the home must:

- have a fire protection rating of 20 minutes or greater, or
- be at least 1 3/8 inches thick and be made of solid bonded wood or steel insulated.

Preventing fires and burns

The law requires items that could catch fire to be a specific distance away from heat sources. Your licenser will cover the specifics with you.

When in use, fireplaces, wood-burning stoves, solid fuel appliances, space heaters, steam radiators, and other potentially hot surfaces, such as steam pipes, must be protected by guards to prevent burns.

The furnace, water heater and any workshop must be inaccessible to children.

Safety equipment

A fire extinguisher with a minimum rating of 2 A 10 BC must be located in or near the kitchen and cooking areas. Fire extinguishers must be serviced annually by a qualified inspector and tagged. All caregivers need to know how to properly use the fire extinguisher.

You must have smoke alarms that are no more than 10 years old. They must be properly installed and maintained on all levels, including basements, and in hallways outside rooms used for sleeping children. In homes with construction that began on or after May 2, 2016, smoke alarms must also be properly installed inside each room used for sleeping children. An approved and operational carbon monoxide alarm must be within 10 feet of each room used for sleeping children.

Electrical guidelines

The following electrical guidelines must be met:

- All electrical outlets accessible to children who are not yet in first grade need to be tamper-proof or shielded when not in use. A tamper-resistant outlet meets this requirement.
- All major electrical appliances must be properly installed, grounded in accordance with the state electric code, and in good working order.
- Extension cords can only be used on a temporary basis. For example, they may be used to plug in a holiday decoration for the season. Extension cords and flexible cords cannot be affixed to structures, extended through walls, ceilings, floors, under doors or floor coverings, nor can they be subject to environmental damage or physical impact.
- Electrical wiring must be sized to provide for the load and must be in good repair.

Equipment

The equipment you use in your program can be new, used, commercial, or homemade as long as it is appropriate for the children and activities. Equipment must be safe and in good repair.

- You must provide an infant seat or high chair and a crib, portable crib, or playpen with a waterproof mattress or pad for each infant in care. The equipment must be of safe and sturdy construction.
- You must provide a mat, crib, bed, cot, sofa, or sleeping bag for each toddler child in care.
- You must provide a mat, bed, cot, sofa, or sleeping bag for each preschooler in care.

Safety inspections of equipment

Cribs, portable cribs, mesh-sided or fabric-sided play yards, pack and plays, and playpens that are used by or are accessible to any child must also be compliant with federal crib standards. You must maintain documentation of each crib's brand name and model numbers.

Before you are licensed and then again each year from the date printed your license, you must check the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (USCPSC) website to be sure that your crib is safe and has not been recalled. In addition, before you are licensed and on a monthly basis, you will need to perform and document a comprehensive safety check.

DHS has created an optional form, titled [Monthly Crib Safety Inspection Form](#) that you can use to fulfill this requirement or you can create your own. You must keep this documentation onsite and make it available to parents and your licensor.

Other supplies you will need

- There must be a working telephone (either a landline or a cell phone) within the residence at all times you are providing care. You may meet this requirement by having a charged cell phone that is available for use.
- Each child must use a separate towel, wash cloth, drinking cup, comb, and other personal articles. Each child may use their towel or wash cloth throughout the day, but it cannot be shared with other children. Each child must be provided with clean and separate bedding and, for infants, this is limited to a fitted sheet appropriate to the mattress size.
- You must have supplies to get rid of bodily fluids, including disposable gloves, disposable bags and eye protection.
- If there is a child in care that uses needles for medication, the license holder must have a sharps container. The sharps container must be stored out of reach of a child. The sharps container cannot be home-made. It can be purchased at any pharmacy.