

Opening a Child Care Center



*Is it the right
choice for
you?*



A document created by

2-1-1
CHILDCARE

Questions to Consider

Have you ever worked in an early childhood program before?

Do you have any educational background in early childhood education and/or business?

Do you have an understanding of how young children grow and develop?

Do you have any experience developing curriculum for young children?

Are you well organized and able to multi-task effectively?

Are you familiar with the State Department of Public Health's regulations regarding child care centers?

Are you prepared to possibly work more than 40 hours a week to operate your own business?

Do you have experience creating and maintaining a budget that is highly impacted by changes in enrollment?

Do you have the skills to:

- handle the accounting and tax record keeping?
- develop policy manuals for employees and parents?
- conduct interviews and check references to hire staff?
- supervise multiple employees and help guide their professional development?
- handle emergencies which may include a child being injured or staff calling out sick?
- communicate with parents on issues such as late payments, children's behavior, or other program issues?
- work effectively with various outside agencies and local officials?



Child Care Center Licensing Regulations

In Connecticut, child care centers (programs serving more than 12 children) must be licensed by the State Department of Public Health. To obtain the regulations and an application, you can contact DPH at:

1-800-282-6063 OR
Department of Public Health,
Child Day Care Licensing
410 Capitol Avenue, MS# 12DAC
PO Box 340308
Hartford, CT 06134-0308
www.ct.gov/dph

Some programs may not need a license to operate legally. Contact DPH for specific information on exempt programs.

Some of the requirements for child care center licensing include but are not limited to:

- Local approvals such as zoning, building, fire, and health
- Lead test if structure was built before 1979
- Water sampling
 - public water supply requires a lead test
 - well water requires a quality test
- Head teacher certification
- Consultants including: education, health, dental, social service, and dietary (if meals are provided)
- Center receives a 4 year license for \$500.00
- Background fingerprinting checks for staff – CT Department of Children and Families, FBI and State
- Policy and procedure manuals
- Insurance for the physical facility



2.

How do I get started in the process of opening a child care center?

Your first decisions revolve around determining if you have a realistic project.

- Is there a demand for child care in that area?
- Is there a suitable location?
- Do you have enough financial resources through personal savings, business loans, or various funding sources?
- Are you prepared to invest the time and effort which may last several years depending on the size and scope of your project?

If you feel that your plan is feasible, you would want to create an appropriate team to help you through the process. This team could include:

- A lawyer to review contracts, advise on zoning, etc.
- A realtor to help you find suitable space, advise on regulatory restrictions, etc.
- An architect to help you design new construction or create plans to add on/renovate an existing building, etc.
- A contractor to help renovate and carry out construction plans
- A project manager to coordinate each aspect of the project



3.

The Physical Facility

A good child care center facility needs to be functional for the children, staff, and families that use the program. When looking for a site, consider the following:

- Are you interested in buying/renovating an existing child care center OR are you interested in having a center built from the ground up?
- Do you want to own your building or rent a space?
- Does zoning allow child care as a use at your potential location?
- Is the building easy to access for your potential customers? (e.g. –located near a main road, ample parking, convenient to area employers, etc.)
- Is the building large enough to handle the numbers of children you want to service? Keep in mind that
 - 50% of the facility typically goes towards classroom space
 - 25% goes towards program support (e.g. – storage, reception area, office space, etc)
 - 25% goes towards support space (e.g. – walls, hallways, janitorial closet, etc).
- DPH requires a minimum of 35 square feet of space per child indoors and 75 square feet of space per child outdoors. However, early childhood experts typically recommend 45-50 square feet per child indoors to help ensure quality.
- Is the building and site free from hazards such as lead paint, underground tanks, asbestos, etc.?
- Do you have the financial resources necessary to bring the building and site up to codes and regulations?



The Classroom Space

- Classrooms serving toddlers and preschool age children will ideally need to have appropriately sized toilets within the classroom space. There needs to be at least one toilet for every 16 children if serving infants, toddlers or preschoolers. For programs that services only school age children, there needs to be one toilet for every 25. Bathrooms must mechanically ventilate to the outdoors.
- Classrooms for infants and toddlers will need separate sinks to accommodate food prep and hand washing for diapering.
- Classrooms for preschool age children will need low sinks for the children and higher sinks for adult use.
- DPH regulations state that infants and toddlers can be in groups of no more than 8 children while preschool and school age children can be in groups of no more than 20. There must be at least one adult for every 4 infants/toddlers and there must be at least one adult for every 10 preschool or school age children.
- Classrooms for any age group need:
 - Adequate natural lighting
 - Space/storage for personal belongings
 - Floor surfacing appropriate for messy activities as well as carpeted areas for comfort and softness
 - Ventilation and climate control
 - Space for parent's use
 - Space that is easily supervised (no hidden areas)
 - Separate areas for different types of activities (quiet/noisy, messy/neat, etc)
 - Materials displayed at child height, easily accessible by children, and organized to promote independent use
 - An atmosphere that is not visually over stimulating
 - Adequate storage for equipment and supplies



5.

Program Support Space

- There needs to be a separate bathroom for staff/adults.
- If you are providing meals other than snack, you will need an appropriate kitchen. This space is not to be used by children and needs to meet local health department regulations.
- You may want to include a reception area for parents that ideally contain resources and comfortable furniture.
- Program support space also includes office space which can sufficiently contain all needed equipment and provide ample space for meeting with staff.
- Staff will need locked storage for their personal items.
- A comfortable and attractive space for staff to use for breaks is important in creating a supportive work environment.
- Some programs have a laundry area with a washer and dryer, especially if they service infants and toddlers and have crib bedding to wash.



Staffing

DPH requirements for staff include, but are not limited to:

- Completed state and federal background checks on all employees (including fingerprint checks and DCF screening).
- There must be at least two staff aged 18 or older on the premise at all times that children are in attendance.
- A Head Teacher on site for at least 60% of the time or more.
 - A head teacher must be 20 years old or older, have a high school diploma or equivalent, have 1080 hours of supervised work experience with same aged children and either a center based CDA or 12 credits in early childhood education.
 - A head teacher that has a 4 year degree in early childhood education would only need to have 360 hours of supervised work experience with same age children.

Qualities to look for when hiring staff:

When hiring infant/toddler caregivers, look for individuals who:

- Provide lots of physical contact such as holding, carrying, rocking, etc.
- Respond to children quickly and lovingly to meet their needs
- Use redirection often as a way to guide children's behavior
- Respect children's individual needs and routines such as napping, feeding, etc.
- Encourage children to reach new milestones, for instance reaching for toys, crawling or walking.

When hiring preschool staff, look for individuals who:

- Encourage children to verbalize their feelings with others
- Help children learn ways to handle conflicts in a positive manner
- Read to children daily and encourage a love of books
- Help children to feel good about themselves by: having lots of one-on-one interactions, offering hugs, smiles, and praise, etc.

When hiring school age staff, look for individuals who:

- Understand that school age children need time for active play after school
- Try to give school age children age appropriate responsibilities
- Include the children in the making of rules
- Realize that this age group still needs nurturing, guidance, and affection while they are becoming increasingly more independent

Outdoor Space

- Climbing equipment and swings needs to have appropriate surfacing material in their fall zones (e.g. – organic loose fill such as wood chips, sand, pea stone, shredded rubber, etc) and have sufficient clearance between pieces of equipment.
- Outdoor play equipment should provide a range of challenges for the ages served.
- Outdoor play equipment must be safe for the ages served and inspected regularly. Metal slides should be avoided.
- You may want to provide several age appropriate riding vehicles for the children to use.
- Adequate shade will increase the children's comfort level and amount of time you can spend outside.
- Outdoor space for infants and toddlers require interesting places to crawl, a variety of safe surfaces, and be protected from active play of older children.
- You may want to consult with the following resources regarding outdoor play equipment:
 - State licensing regulations
 - The US Consumer Product Safety Commission
 - The American Society for Testing and Materials
 - The International Play Equipment Manufacturers Association

** There are numerous vendors that sell equipment and materials for early childhood programs. You can research this information on-line. **



Quality Early Learning Environment

Quality early learning programs help to foster young children's development in all areas. These developmental areas and potential activities include:

- Fine motor (e.g. – stringing beads, puzzles, shape sorters, Lego's, etc.)
- Gross motor (e.g. – dancing, skipping, jumping, etc).
- Social/emotional (e.g. – reading books that discuss feelings, dolls, puppets, etc).
- Cognitive (e.g. – board games, matching/sorting games, science experiments, etc).

For infants and toddlers, arrange classrooms to provide for basic care needs such as: sleeping, eating, diapering/toileting and playing.

- Arrange cribs in a separate area that allows for supervision by staff. A separate sleep area allows infants to be on their own individual schedule.
- Infants will need highchairs with stable bases and safety straps for feeding.
- Locate changing tables in a visible area allowing for supervision of other children.
- Provide lots of space for children who are crawling and new to walking. A variety of indoor climbing equipment is helpful for this age group.

In addition, many centers serving infants and toddlers provide a space near the entrance where parents can take off their shoes to prevent dirt from getting on the floor.

Consider offering mothers who are nursing, a comfortable, private area to breastfeed the child.

For preschool and school age children, classrooms would be arranged to create various learning centers such as:

- Block play
- Dramatic Play
- Music/movement
- Art
- Cooking
- Sand/water
- Woodworking
- Books
- Discovery science
- Computers
- Table toys/manipulatives
- Indoor active play

9.



Financial Help

- CT Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA)
10 Columbus Boulevard 7th floor
Hartford, CT 06106
1-800-750-1862
www.chefa.com

This organization provides access to funding for Connecticut's child care providers.

- CT Children's Investment Partnership (CCIP)
C/O LISC
227 Lawrence Street 2nd floor
Hartford, CT 06106
860-525-4821
www.ct-cip.org

This organization provides financing for construction or renovation of child care centers serving low income pre-school age children.

- CT Community Investment Corporation (CTCIC)
100 Crown Street
New Haven, CT 06510
203-776-6172
www.ctcic.org

This organization provides child care micro loans.



Resource List

2-1-1 Child Care
1344 Silas Deane Highway
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
2-1-1 or 1-800-505-1000
www.211childcare.org

2-1-1 Child Care is a confidential child care referral telephone service-just dial 2-1-1. Child Care Resource and Referral Specialists are available to assist parents and child care professionals in locating appropriate resources and referrals.

2-1-1 Child Care maintains current listings of child care programs as well as listings for nanny agencies, nursery schools, play groups, summer camps, Head Start and School Readiness programs.

2-1-1 Child Care provides referrals to:

- Training opportunities in the community
- Local director's groups
- Scholarship information for professional development
- Approved first aid and administration of medications trainings

2-1-1 Child Care provides information about:

- Average fee reports by town or region
- Capacity/Availability Data

2-1-1 Child Care offers:

- On sight staff training opportunities
- Technical Assistance

- Department of Public Health,
Child Day Care Licensing
410 Capitol Avenue, MS# 12DAC
PO Box 340308
Hartford, CT 06134-0308
1-800-282-6063
www.ct.gov/dph

- Care 4 Kids
1344 Silas Deane Highway
Rocky Hill, CT 06067
1-888-214-5437
www.ctcare4kids.com

- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)
1509 16th Street NW
Washington, DC 20036
1-800-424-2460
www.naeyc.org

- CT Association for the Education of Young Children (CAEYC)
495 Blake Street
New Haven, CT 06511
203-287-3914
www.ctaeyc.org
- International Play Equipment Manufacturing Association (IPEMA)
8300 Colesville Road Suite 250
Silver Spring, MD 20910
1-800-395-5550
www.IPEMA.org
- The National Program for Playground Safety
National Action Plan for the Prevention of
Playground Injuries
1-800-554-PLAY
www.uni.edu/playground
- The US Consumer Product Safety Commission
Washington, DC 20207
1-800-638-2772
www.cpsc.gov
- American Society for Testing and Materials
100 Bar Harbor Drive
West Conshohocken, PA 19428
610-832-9585
www.astm.org
- Small Business Administration
CT District Office
330 Main Street 2nd floor
Hartford, CT 06106
860-240-4700
1-800-827-5722
www.sba.gov/ct/
- National Child Care Information Center
10530 Rosehaven Street Suite 400
Fairfax, VA 22030
1-800-616-2242
www.nccic.org