



Licensed Group Child Care FAQs

Q: Am I qualified to run the center?

A: A group child care center needs to have one person or a combination of people who meet the qualifications of an administrator and a program director. This chart represents the minimum or least restrictive requirement for entry level educational qualifications. Please consult the exact language of the rule. Information in this chart paraphrases language in the rule, DCF 251, Licensing Rules for Group Day Care Centers.

Position Title	Min. Age	High School	Experience	Training
Administrator <i>Note: An administrator may meet qualifications by choosing one option in the experience and one in the training column.</i>	21	YES	Must have at least: One year as a manager OR One credit/non-credit course in business or program administration	Must have at least: One year as a center director or child care teacher OR One credit/non-credit course in early childhood education
Center Director Licensed Capacity of 50 or less	21	YES	80 working days full time in licensed center OR 120 working days half time in a licensed center	Two credit/non-credit courses in early childhood education OR 2 years of credit from institution or higher education with 3 credits in early childhood education.
Center Director Licensed Capacity of 51 or more	21	YES	2 years as a child care teacher or center director in a licensed group day care center	4 credit/non-credit courses in early childhood education OR 2 years of credit from institution of higher education with 12 credits in early childhood education

Q: Are background checks required?

A: YES. Once a completed application is submitted, the licensing office will do a background check on the licensee and the child care center will complete background checks on anyone having direct contact with the children, including staff, volunteers, and substitute caregivers. For more information, visit the [Wisconsin Department of Children and Families website](#).

Q: Do I need policies?

A: YES. Policies are written statements about the beliefs, standards, and ideals you structure your center upon. They describe in detail how you will operate your childcare business. They guide your day-to-day operations. It is critical that you take the time now to carefully research and think through many important issues regarding the policies you implement. Put those thoughts in writing, and plan how you will turn them into actionable policies. Parent or staff handbooks are not policies. These handbooks summarize important information for parents and staff. Policies are much more in-depth documents. For more information on policies see our Policy Development page.

Q: If I have a private well for water, is testing needed?

A: YES. A private well may be either transient or non-transient. Water must be tested annually for bacteria content, and if children under 6 months will be cared for, then a nitrate test is also required. [Click here](#) for more information on testing of wells and water, or contact your local Health Department.

Q: Is zoning an issue?

A: YES. Call your local zoning office to ask if the property is already zoned to permit a child care center. You may be required to obtain an occupancy permit. If you must request an exception or variance to the zoning, you will typically have to fill in paperwork, submit a floor plan, (a drawing of the layout of the rooms), a site plan, (a drawing of the building on the property), pay a fee, and meet with the zoning board.

Q: Will I need a building inspection?

A: YES. New centers need a building inspection **or** occupancy permit. In order to get one or the other the plumbing inspection and fire inspection must be completed before the inspection report will be approved or the occupancy permit issued. **Most** existing centers have already had a building inspection or an occupancy permit issued so they will only require a fire inspection. Depending on whether you are a new or an existing center, your building will need to be inspected, using the state building codes, by one of the following: (There may be a fee involved).

1. Certified local building inspector
2. Wisconsin registered architect or engineer
3. Commercial building inspector certified by the Wisconsin Dept. of Commerce
4. Certified fire chief

Q: Will my building plans need to be reviewed?

A: YES. Get information about the building plan review process and who to contact, at the Department of Safety and Professional Services [website](#).

Q: What do I need to know about starting my own business?

A: Visit the [Wisconsin Small Business Development Center](#). It was designed to make it easy for you to obtain the information you need to seriously plan and prepare for the start or expansion of your business. Follow the links to find everything you need for most business ventures, including educational and financial resources as well as step-by-step help in registering your business with the state. This is a critical step!

The top two reasons new business fail are:

1. Not having a sound business structure. You need plans for employee care, marketing, and finances.
2. Not having enough money to get the business going. Getting your center licensed will take 6-12 months or more. When you first open your doors, you may have as little as 10% of your total licensed capacity enrolled.