

Child Care Resource & Referral

Summary of NH Child Care Regulations

This information is intended to help you determine what program best meets your needs and meets legal requirements in NH. This is a summary of minimum required standards; individual policies may vary.

In NH, child care is regulated by the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Program Support, Bureau of Child Care Licensing. For more information in NH, contact:

Bureau of Child Care Licensing
 Department of Health and Human Services
 129 Pleasant Street
 Concord, NH 03301
 Telephone: (603) 271-4624
 Toll free in NH: (800) 852-3345, ext. 4624

You may also call to see if a program you are interested in has founded complaints or violations. The first request is free, additional statements of findings are available for \$2.50 each.

Day Care Nursery

Any center-based agency that cares for 5 or more children ages 6 weeks to 36 months.

Night Care

Any agency that cares for children between the hours of 7:00pm and 6:00am. Children may be in care for a maximum of 12 hours in any given 24 hour period. Night care agencies must provide for privacy and separation by gender for bathing, toileting and sleeping for all children.

School - Age Program

A center-based agency in which child care is provided for more than 5 children ages 4.8 years and older for up to 5 hours per day before and after school and all day when school is closed.

What is Not Covered by the BCCL

In NH, the following types of care do not require a license from the Bureau of Child Care Licensing:

- Care provided in the child's own home.
- Family child care for up to three children who are not the provider's own children.
- Programs run by approved private or public elementary schools that are regulated by the NH Department of Education.
- Children's programs run by other government programs which also do their own regulating (Army, etc.).
- Some camp and summer programs for school age children.
- Municipal recreation programs.

Definitions and Descriptions

Family Child Care Home

An occupied residence in which the provider may care for up to 6 preschool children, and often, 3 school age children. The provider must be over 18, and the provider's resident's children up to age 10 are counted when they are present.

Family Group Child Care Home

Also an occupied residence, in which the provider works with an aide or co-worker. The provider must be at least 18, and the aide must be at least 16. Together they may care for up to 12 preschool children, and often, up to 5 school-age children.

Group Child Care Agency

A center-based agency that provides care for preschool age children, and no more than 5 school-age children and 4 children under 3. Services can be known as child care centers, day nurseries, nursery schools, child development centers, day cares, etc.

Preschool Program

An agency that provides care and a structured program for children 3 years and older for 5 hours per day maximum. Any child care center calling itself a nursery school, kindergarten, learning center, child development program, etc. must meet preschool program requirements for curriculum.

Other Types of Regulation

Many programs are also regularly inspected by other agencies such as zoning boards, fire departments, town health and safety coordinators, and Child and Adult Food Program Coordinators. Ask your local resource and referral coordinator or the provider for more information about these types of inspections.

The BCCL requires that anyone 17 years of age or older working in a licensed child care program submit to a NH criminal history record check conducted by the State Police Department. In addition, other individuals age 16 and older who in contact with children and all family child care home household members age 10 and older must submit to a child abuse and neglect background check conducted by NH DCYF.

Quality Indicators in Child Care

Child Care Centers

Group Size and Ratio

| Age of Children | Group Size | Child: Staff Ratio * | Max. Groups per Room |
|-----------------|------------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| 6wks-12mos | 4 | 4:1 | 3 |
| 13mos-24mos | 5 | 5:1 | 3 |
| 25mos-35mos | 6 | 6:1 | 3 |
| 36mos-47mos | 8 | 8:1 | 3 |
| 48mos-59mos | 12 | 12:1 | 2 |
| 60mos-up | 15 | 15:1 | 2 (3 in school-age programs) |

* At least one of the staff must qualify as a child care worker

When there are mixed ages in the same group, ratio is based on the average age of children in the group. Infants may be included in mixed age groups with children over age three only with certain restrictions, and the maximum number of children under age three allowed in a mixed age group is 16.

When 11 or more children of any age are present, there must be at least 2 child care personnel present as well. There must also be 2 staff present when there are 5 or more children under the age of three on-site.

Staff Training

A center is required to have on staff an **agency director** or qualified substitute who has at least 1000 hours of work experience with young children and the approved equivalent of an A.A. in early childhood education.

Teachers are required to have a high school diploma and at least 12 credits in early childhood education, or its approved equivalent. There must be 1 qualified teacher per every 8 staff members.

Child care workers must have a high school diploma and at least 6 credits in early childhood education or its approved equivalent.

Child care assistants or aides must be at least 16 years old and must always be under the direct supervision of a worker.

The director or substitute of a school-age program must be on-site during *all* operating hours when the program is open 5 hours or less, and 2/3 of the day when open more than 5 hours (holidays). A child care worker must be present for the other 1/3 of operating hours.

The director or substitute of a center, nursery, preschool program or night care agency must be present for 2/3 of daily operating hours.

NH currently requires 6 hours per year of ongoing training in early education for center staff.

At least one staff member certified in Infant/Child CPR and First Aid must be on the premises at all times.

Family or Family Group Child Care Homes

Group Size and Ratio

Family child care homes with one provider may generally care for 6 preschool children and 3 school-age children, with no more than 4 children under 36 months, of which no more than 2 children may be under 24 months of age.

Family group child care providers who employ an assistant may care for up to 12 preschool children and often 5 school-age children, and no more than 4 children may be under 36 months of age.

Training

Family child care providers who are under age 21 must complete a BCCL approved child care curriculum. This is not required of providers age 21 and over.

NH currently requires 6 hours per year of ongoing training in early childhood education for family child care providers.

Family child care providers must be certified in Infant/Child CPR and First Aid.

Other Information of Interest to Parents

Before beginning in licensed care in NH, children must have documentation of current immunizations on file at the child care program. A current medical examination must be on file within 60 days of beginning child care.

Most pets, with the exception of most reptiles, bats, turtles and birds in child care spaces, are allowed in NH. Immunizations and separate feeding and liter areas are required.

Child care programs must assure that children receive adequate, nutritious meals and snacks during their day.

Children in care for more than 5 hours must be offered an age-appropriate rest or nap period of at least 1 hour. Children not asleep within 30 minutes must be given the option of a quiet activity. Sleeping areas must be supervised at all times.

Corporal punishment is prohibited in all child care settings.