



What is Child Care?

The law defines child care as...

- ✓ three or more unrelated children under 13 years of age
- ✓ receiving care from a non-relative
- ✓ on a regular basis, of at least once a week
- ✓ for more than four hours per day but less than 24 hours.

When all these conditions exist, a license is required. The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services is responsible for regulating child care. This is done through the Division of Child Development (DCD). The purpose of regulation is to protect the well being of children while they are away from their parents.

The North Carolina Child Care Commission is responsible for adopting rules to carry out the law. Some counties and cities in North Carolina also have local zoning requirements for child care programs.

Ratios

Ratios are the number of staff required to supervise a certain number of children. Group size is the maximum number of children in one group. Low teacher and child ratios and small group sizes are important to the quality of care. Ratios and group sizes for licensure are shown below.

Age	Teacher : Child Ratio	Maximum Group Size
Birth - 12 months	1:5	10
12 – 24 months	1:6	12
2 years	1:10	20
3 years	1:15	25
4 years	1:20	25
School-age	1:25	25

Small centers in a residence that are licensed for six to twelve children may keep up to three additional school-age children, depending on the ages of the other children in care. When the group has children of different ages, staff-child ratios and group size must be met for the youngest child in the group.

Parental Rights

- ✓ Parents have the right to enter a family childcare home or center at any time while their child is present.
- ✓ Parents have the right to see the license displayed in a prominent place.
- ✓ Parents have the right to know how their child will be disciplined.

The law and rules are developed to establish minimum requirements. Most parents would like more than minimum care for their children. As a Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, Work Family Resource Center can provide parents with help in choosing quality care. Work Family Resource Center welcomes and encourages parents to call or stop by and talk with a Parent Specialist regarding their child care needs.

Child Care Centers

Licensing of a center addresses staff qualifications, written activity plans, staff: child ration, nutritional standards, and health, sanitation and building/fire safety. Religious-sponsored programs may choose not to be licensed and may be exempt from some of the regulations. Programs that operate for less than four months in a row, or less than four hours per day, such as summer camps, half-day programs, and school-age care may be exempt from licensing. Some smaller centers are located in homes, and meet more standards than family childcare homes in order to care for more children. Centers will receive an unannounced visit to make sure they are following the law and to receive guidance from childcare consultants.

Family Child Care Homes

A family childcare home is licensed to care for five or fewer preschool aged children, including preschoolers living in that home. (Individuals caring for one or two children are exempt from being licensed.) In addition, three school age children may be enrolled. The provider's own school-age children are not counted for purposes of licensure. Licenses are issued to family childcare providers who meet the following requirements:

- ✓ New home providers must be 21 years of age with at least a high school education or it's equivalent. They must also be mentally and emotionally capable of caring for children.
- ✓ He or she must undergo a criminal background check.
- ✓ All household members over age 15 who are present in new family childcare homes when children are in care must also undergo a criminal background check.
- ✓ All family childcare home providers must have some training in child development and CPR each year, plus First Aid every 3 years.
- ✓ All family childcare homes must meet basic health and safety standards
- ✓ Providers must have a copy of children's health forms on hand, provide age-appropriate toys and activities, and nutritious meals and snacks for children.

Discipline

Corporal punishment (spanking, slapping, or other physical discipline) is prohibited in all family childcare homes and centers. Religious-sponsored programs that notify the Division of Child Development that corporal punishment is part of their religious training are exempt from that part of the law.

How to Report a Problem

If you have a complaint about a childcare provider, please call the Division of Child Development at 1-800-859-0829 or Work Family Resource Center at 336-761-5100.



The 5 Star Rating System

The State of North Carolina Division of Child Development created a system to rate child care programs according to quality -- **The Star-Rating System**. A Program holding one star indicates that the program meets North Carolina's minimum requirements to be licensed. A five star license means that the program meets voluntary enhanced standards required for the highest star rating.

You can view regulatory information on each licensed child care program at the NC Division of Child Development's website www.ncchildcare.net then click on Search for Child Care.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW

All licensed programs, except for religious sponsored programs, have a star rating similar to the ratings you will find for other products and services, such as restaurants or hotels. The child care license should be posted in every program. On the license you will see the scores the program has earned in the two major components of the license:

- **Program Standards-** types of activities for the children, staff/child ratios.
- **Staff Education-** education pertaining to child development.

Programs with higher scores in Program Standards and Staff Education have fewer substantiations of child abuse and neglect.

THE QUALITY POINT

The star system allows programs to earn up to seven points in program standards, seven points in staff education, and an option to earn one point in quality. Programs may earn the additional point in quality for exceeding license requirements such as:

75% of teachers with advanced degrees in Early Childhood Education

OR

75% of teachers with 10 years early child-hood experience

AND

turnover rates of less than 20%.



All licensed child care centers and family child care homes are required to position their license in a prominent location visible to parents. The number of colored stars on the license is the number of stars the child care provider has achieved.

Number of Stars Received	Total Points Earned
	4 - 6 Points
	7 - 9 Points
	10 - 12 Points
	13 - 15 Points

UNDERSTANDING COMPLIANCE HISTORY

Child care programs must maintain at least 75% score in compliance history over the past 18 months or since they opened. Every three years a program's compliance history is re-assessed. Research has shown that quality care and strong outcomes for children are closely linked to higher points in Program Standards and Staff Education.

You can research a programs compliance history at www.ncchildcare.net. Click on the Search for Child Care tab.



Checklist for Choosing Child Care

Choosing child care can be a time-consuming and frustrating task. Below are some questions you may want to ask when choosing and visiting child care facilities. If you have any questions concerning child care contact Work Family Resource Center at 761-5100 or 1-800-937-7610.

Pre-qualification items to consider:

- ◆ Do the hours of operation meet your needs?
- ◆ Is the location convenient for you?
- ◆ What is the cost of child care and what is included (meals, snacks, diapers, etc.)?
- ◆ Do they participate in subsidy programs?
- ◆ Are references available for the facility and staff?
- ◆ Is there a policy regarding inclement weather?
- ◆ What is the fee policy regarding when children are out sick or for vacation time?
- ◆ Is the facility required to be regulated by the state?
- ◆ Where young children are cared for, are gates placed at stairways?
- ◆ What does the facility look like from your child's height (are there any hidden dangers)?
- ◆ Are there smoke detectors and fire extinguishers?
- ◆ How are emergency evacuations handled and are drills held regularly?
- ◆ Are emergency phone numbers posted?
- ◆ Is there a first aid kit available?
- ◆ Are bathrooms and/or diaper changing areas sanitary?
- ◆ Is kitchen area clean?
- ◆ Are hand-washing procedures followed by staff and children?
- ◆ Is the environment stimulating for young children?
- ◆ Are bright colors a part of the decor of the rooms?
- ◆ Where will the child spend most of their time?
- ◆ Is there enough space for the children and the children's activities?
- ◆ What security measures does the facility provide?
- ◆ *Are there restrictions placed on who may pick up my child?*

Questions to ask or observations to make during a tour:

Facility and Materials (health, safety, sanitation, stimulation, and security):

- ◆ Do children receive nutritious meals and snacks?
- ◆ Is there a policy/provision regarding care for sick children?
- ◆ Are there individual cribs (for infants) cots/mats (for others)?
- ◆ Is the facility child proof, safe, clean and orderly?
- ◆ Are the toys, equipment, and materials safe and non-toxic?
- ◆ Is there an outdoor space provided? If outdoor space is provided, is the play area safe?

Staff Quality:

- ◆ *What level of staff training and accreditation is required? Is it ongoing?*
- ◆ How long has most of the staff worked at the center and cared for children?

- ◆ What are the hiring procedures and criteria?
- ◆ What is the staff/child ratio?
- ◆ Are the children carefully watched and supervised?
- ◆ *Does the staff take the time to comfort, hug, and hold the children?*
- ◆ Does the staff treat children with respect, flexibility, patience, as well as provide individual attention?
- ◆ Does the staff listen and talk to the children responsively and are they enthusiastic as they interact with children?
- ◆ Do staff members greet and talk with each parent/child as they arrive and are they pleasant?
- ◆ Is the staff trained in first aid, CPR and early childhood education?
- ◆ Does staff check attendance every time children enter and leave the program?

Program:

- ◆ Will your baby be held when given a bottle?
- ◆ Will the program cooperate with nursing mothers?
- ◆ Does the program meet the special needs of your child?
- ◆ Is the program designed to enhance growth and development?
- ◆ Does the program offer a variety of educational, recreational and social activities?
- ◆ Does the program allow for each child's independence?
- ◆ Are the children grouped by age or developmental level?
- ◆ Do children have a supervised rest/nap time each day?
- ◆ Are the children taken outdoors and if so, for how long?
- ◆ Are stories read?
- ◆ Is there minimal supervised TV, if any?
- ◆ Are there opportunities for free play/free time each day? Are the toys, equipment, and materials age-appropriate and are there enough for all children?
- ◆ Does the staff post a schedule of activities?
- ◆ *How is discipline handled and is good behavior encouraged?*
- ◆ Are the parents encouraged to drop in and visit?
- ◆ Is there a parent handbook, which clearly outlines the program's policies, including

those related to injury, sickness, discipline, dress, drop-off, etc?

- ◆ Are there opportunities for parents to participate in program planning?

Overall Impression for final decision-making:

- ◆ Do you feel comfortable leaving your child at this center?
- ◆ Will the facility, staff, and program be able to meet your child's developmental and emotional needs?
- ◆ Do the children appear happy and does the staff appear to enjoy the children?
- ◆ Do you feel confident that the staff will take the time to discuss your child with you and will value parents as being experts regarding their own children?

Once you have made a decision:

- ◆ Set up a "trial day" when your child can join in activities while you observe.
- ◆ Drop in unannounced and visit regularly.
- ◆ *Leave emergency contact information with the caregiver.*
- ◆ Set up "back-up plans" in case your child or you are ill.
- ◆ Get involved with your child's day care experience!
- ◆ Review this checklist anytime to re-evaluate your child care needs.



Quality Indicators

What to Look for When Choosing Child Care

Whether you are visiting a part day preschool, a full time child care in a center or a home, or even a school age care provider, there are specific indicators you can look for to evaluate the quality of every child care program. While full time child care programs will also have the star rated license that helps you know the state has seen higher quality indicators at the program, part day programs and summer camps are exempt from those licensing criteria. It would be perfectly normal to ask the program to provide references of parents who used their program in the past to get a better understanding of the program. If you are concerned about the program not having a higher star rating, consider the following as you visit the programs:

Health and Safety Standards

Clean, smoke free, well lit environment without items that might be harmful to children
Clean and safe toys for the children to use
Emergency Plans in place
Frequent hand washing, before meals, after bathroom and diapering
First Aid equipment available
Nutritious meals served
Rules for giving and storing medications are followed.
Drinking water free and available often
Infants placed on their backs to sleep to reduce the risk of SIDS.
Written permission required for providers to transport children.
Outdoors: Fenced in play area, shade, staff can see entire area; weather permitting, children should play outside every day.

Positive Teacher/Child Interaction

Teachers work with children in a nurturing, warm and friendly manner
Positive Reinforcement and Redirection used
Discipline is age appropriate and never physical, verbal or mentally abusive.

Staff Child Ratios – Small Group Sizes

The more teachers are available to work with the children, the more attention each child will have, which will help with their social and emotional development. See how many children are grouped together with each teacher. Check the ratios on the first page of our parent pack to make sure they are legal, or even operate at a higher standard than the legal limit.

Staff Education

Education and ongoing training in childhood development will help teachers understand how to help your child develop in a positive way. Often this helps enhance the quality of the child care.

Staff Turnover

Consistency and low turnover are very important to providers offering quality care. Consistency is important in children's emotional health and helps provide security, confidence, and an overall sense of well being.

Family Involvement

Stay involved with what's going on at your child's program/provider! Drop in to visit when possible, ask the provider how your child is doing each day and week, help with field trips when possible. You are legally able to visit at any time when you have a child enrolled in child care.

Check on the Division of Child Development website regularly to see if the program has had any complaints and is keeping up with the state's rules and regulations.

Accreditation

Programs can go through a voluntary process that shows they operate with standards above and beyond the minimum licensure standards. Common NC organizations are:

National Association for the Education of Young Children
National Association for Family Child Care
National Afterschool Association

Developmentally Appropriate Activities

Age appropriate materials and toys
Activities that focus on both fine and large motor skills
Books of all varieties for children to use and read daily
Children allowed to make choices
TV viewing limited or excluded from program activities

Work Family Resource Center

530 N Spring St
Winston-Salem, NC 27101
336-761-5100

www.workfamilyresource.org

Compliance History

Instructions on how to check the Compliance History of a child care program

1. At the home page of the **Division of Child Development's** website www.ncchildcare.net, click the parent rectangle at the top of the page.
2. On the left hand side of the next page, click the Search for Child Care rectangle.
3. A Search Engine should appear that will have information on every licensed facility in North Carolina.
4. Type in the name of the facility you want to learn more about, and fill in the other city, county, and zip as appropriate. If you do not know the zip code of the program you are looking at, just fill out the county category, and the search engine will find all licensed facilities with that name in the county for you, and will list the addresses to help you sort through which is which.
5. Click on the name of the program you want to learn information about.
6. At the top of the screen, there are little file tabs running across that look like this:



7. As you click on each different tab, you can learn more information about the child care program.
8. The "DCD Visits" tab will show you when the state has gone to investigate or check up on a child care program, and those incidences highlighted in blue allow you to click on them and learn more details.
9. The "Actions Taken" tab will show you if the state has had to take action against the provider within the past 3 years.
10. To learn more information about a specific action taken against a program, or a DCD visit not highlighted in blue, call DCD at 1-800-859-0829.



CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS ABOUT PROGRAMS/FACILITIES

POLICY

In accordance with Work Family Resource Center's mission "To address work and family related issues in order to strengthen families and improve the quality of life in our community", the most important consideration in responding to all complaints (there are two basic types of complaints: personal complaints and serious complaints) about child care programs is the safety and well-being of the children. When a parent calls Work Family Resource Center with a complaint, the staff will document the parent's concern. However, Work Family Resource Center is not a regulatory agency and its staff members do not investigate complaints or make decisions about the legitimacy of allegations.

Work Family Resource Center (WFRC) will:

1. Be supportive of parents and child care providers in their efforts to resolve complaint situations and ensure quality care for children.
2. Record complaints received about child care providers on the Complaint Intake form and follow the actions listed below based on the nature of the complaint.
3. Report alleged child abuse and neglect, as required by law, and alleged violations of the child care licensing standards, to the appropriate agencies for investigation, as well as encouraging reporters to do so.
4. Offer technical assistance to child care providers to help them improve their quality of care and avoid future complaints.
5. Notify providers in writing seven business days after WFRC has received notice of an abuse or neglect investigation against them from the NC Division of Child Development. This notice will not include the name of the person who made the complaint.
6. Temporarily suspend referrals to child care programs that are the subject of serious or abuse and neglect complaints (see definitions below) until the situation or investigation is resolved. A suspension will remain in effect until all of the following conditions are met:
 - for the time period specified in the notification, and;
 - until the provider has sent a copy of the Closing Correspondence about the investigation, and;
 - the WFRC administrative staff, Executive Director or Program Director, is satisfied that the conditions causing suspension no longer exist, and;
 - the provider requests reinstatement on the list.
7. Permanently remove child care providers from the WFRC Referral List if any of the following occurs:
 - revocation of NC Child Care License

- failure to respond to this agency's inquiries concerning complaints
- a pattern of serious complaints over time

Recording the Complaint

There are two basic types of complaints: **personal complaints** which are not violations of child care licensing rules and **serious complaints** which involve violations of child care licensing rules or abuse and neglect.

When WFRC receives a **personal complaint**, it is documented on a Complaint Intake form stating the facts as received from the reporter. The form is placed in the provider's complaint file. (This file is not shared with the general public.) If a number of personal complaints accumulate for one provider, WFRC will contact the provider to offer technical assistance and to discuss continued listing.

When a **serious complaint** is received, it is documented on the Complaint Intake form stating the facts as received from the reporter. Work Family will then contact the assigned licensing consultant and /or child protective services to report the complaint. The Complaint Intake form will also be faxed to the Abuse & Neglect Department of the Division of Child Development then placed in the provider's complaint file. (This file is not shared with the general public.)

If the Division of Child Development notifies WFRC that a provider is under investigation, referrals will be withheld until the matter is resolved and the above stated conditions have been met (refer to number 6 above).

Work Family will notify the provider in writing that a notice of investigation of their program has been received from the Division of Child Development and that referrals to their program will be withheld until the matter is resolved.

Unlicensed Providers, operating legally (*less than 4 hours/day, exempt, etc*)

When complaints are lodged against providers who are not licensed by the state of North Carolina, WFRC will follow its complaint policy as described. However, because there is no agency that regulates these types of care, such programs are included on the WFRC database at the agency's discretion and we reserve the right to remove any provider from this database.

Disclosure of Information

During routine referral calls, parents ask for a list of child care programs that meet their family's child care needs. During these routine calls, providers flagged in our database as being under investigation are omitted from the list of referrals given to the parents. If parents ask about a provider who is flagged in our system, they will be told that the provider is temporarily removed from our referral list. If the caller inquires as to the reason, he or she will be given the official complaint handed down from the NC Division of Child Development. WFRC staff will also encourage all parents to review the compliance history records on file at the agency.

Confidentiality

WFRC will maintain confidential records of all complaints that are received, and will do our best to work cooperatively with all child care providers and parents. We will accept anonymous complaints; however, we prefer to collect contact information so the investigative agencies can verify the complaint.



CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS ABOUT CONSUMER EDUCATION & REFERRAL SERVICES

POLICY

Work Family Resource Center staff may receive complaints on services provided. It is the policy of WFRC to ensure that a fair, equitable, and efficient method is followed for handling the complaint that is respectful of the complainant and the staff member involved. Customers will be informed about the complaint policy near the end of every referral call, in the cover letter sent with all referrals, and on the agency website. Staff will use the following policy statement:

“Work Family Resource Center is committed to provide high quality consumer education and referral services to all customers. If you have any comments, concerns or are not satisfied with the service you have received, please ask to speak with our Program Director”.

In the event that a complaint is received regarding services provided by WFRC, the following steps will be taken to resolve the issue:

The WFRC staff member will assure complainant that the complaint will be investigated.

The WFRC staff person will document the complaint on the CCR&R Complaint Intake Form, filling in all necessary information, as presented by the complainant, and make no remarks that would indicate agreement, disagreement, or concern with the complaint as presented by the complainant.

The complainant will be informed that the executive director will investigate the complaint and respond to the complaint.

1. WFRC staff will inform the Program Director of the complaint.
2. The Program Director will review documentation provided and contact the complainant for additional discussion if needed.
3. The Program Director will provide a verbal or written response to the complainant.
4. Should a resolution not be reached and the complainant continues to have concerns, the Program Director will share the complaint with WFRC Executive Director.