**[h1] Guidelines, Licenses, QRIS, and Ratios by State**

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**Child Care Licensing, QRIS, and Staff Standards by State [h2]**

**Note: To find the full details and latest licensing regulations link, simply...**

1. Navigate to your favorite search engine. Ex: Google
2. Type your state’s licensing regulation “Ex: for Alabama “Minimum Standards for Day Care Centers”
3. Navigate to the appropriate link within the search.

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| **State** | **Licensing Regulations** |
| Alabama | Minimum Standards for Day Care Centers |
| Alaska | 7 AAC 57 – Child Care Facilities Licensing |
| Arizona | Arizona Child Care Facility Licensing Rules |
| Arkansas | Arkansas Minimum Licensing Requirements |
| California | Title 22 – Child Care Center Regulations |
| Colorado | 12 CCR 2509-8 – Child Care Center Rules |
| Connecticut | CT Child Care Center Regulations |
| Delaware | Delacare Regulations – OCCL |
| District of Columbia | DCMR Title 5-A, Chapter 1 – Licensing of Child Development Facilities |
| Florida | Child Care Facility Handbook |
| Georgia | Rules for Child Care Learning Centers |
| Hawaii | Hawaii Child Care Center Licensing |
| Idaho | Idaho Daycare Licensing Standards |
| Illinois | IL Day Care Center Licensing Standards |
| Indiana | IN Licensing Rules for Child Care Centers |
| Iowa | Iowa Admin Code r. 441-109 |
| Kansas | Child Care Center Licensing Regulations |
| Kentucky | 922 KAR 2:120 – Center-Based Care |
| Louisiana | Bulletin 137 – Licensing Regulations for Class A Centers |
| Maine | 10-148 CMR Ch. 32 – Child Care Facilities |
| Maryland | COMAR 13A.16 – Child Care Centers |
| Massachusetts | 606 CMR 7.00 – Child Care Center Regulations |
| Michigan | Michigan Licensing Rules for Centers |
| Minnesota | MN Rules, Chapter 9503 |
| Mississippi | MS Regulations for Child Care Facilities |
| Missouri | MO Child Care Center Licensing Rules |
| Montana | MT Admin Rules, Chapter 37.95 |
| Nebraska | 391 NAC 3 – Child Care Center Licensing |
| Nevada | NAC 432A – Services for Care of Children |
| New Hampshire | He-C 4002 – Licensing Rules |
| New Jersey | Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers |
| New Mexico | CYFD Licensing Regulations |
| New York | NYCRR Part 418-1 – Day Care Centers |
| North Carolina | NC Child Care Rules |
| North Dakota | ND Admin Code Chapter 75-03-10 |
| Ohio | OAC Chapter 5101:2-12 – Child Care Centers |
| Oklahoma | Oklahoma DHS Licensing Requirements |
| Oregon | OAR 414-300 – Child Care Centers |
| Pennsylvania | 55 Pa. Code Chapter 3270 |
| Rhode Island | RI DHS Child Care Center Regulations |
| South Carolina | SC Code Regs Chapter 114 – Child Care Centers |
| South Dakota | ARSD 67:42 – Child Care Centers |
| Tennessee | 1240-04-03 – DHS Child Care Centers |
| Texas | Chapter 746 – Minimum Standards for Centers |
| Utah | Utah Admin Code R381 |
| Vermont | CBCCPP Licensing Regulations |
| Virginia | 8VAC20-780 – Child Day Centers |
| Washington | WAC Chapter 110-300 |
| West Virginia | WV Code of State Rules 78-1 |
| Wisconsin | DCF 251 – Group Child Care Centers |
| Wyoming | WY Chapter 4 – Child Care Center Licensing |

**QRIS Rating by State [h2]**

Check out a [**state-by-state guide**](https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/public-policy-advocacy/state-qris)**.**

**Child Care to Staff Ratios by State [h2]**

Check the ratios by[**state**](https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/child-care-ratio-by-state).

## **Federal and National Guidelines for Child Care [h2]**

Childcare may be licensed at the state level. Still, the foundation of quality, safety, and accountability is set by national standards that ripple through every classroom, nursery, and play space in America.

* **Administration for Children and Families (ACF) – Office of Child Care (OCC):**

Overseen by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the OCC doesn’t just fund childcare; it enforces essential protections. Thanks to the [Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act of 2014](https://www.childcareaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/New-CCDBG-Backgorund-Check-Guidance_10.26.17.pdf#:~:text=1,resided%20during%20the%20preceding%205), all states must implement comprehensive background checks for childcare staff, including FBI fingerprinting and child abuse registry searches. But that’s just the beginning. The [CCDF](https://worldpopulationreview.com/state-rankings/child-care-ratio-by-state#:~:text=All%20states%20that%20license%20child,These%20vary%20from) also requires that every provider receive rigorous training, from CPR and first aid to emergency preparedness and safe sleep. These aren’t suggestions; they’re non-negotiables that now anchor every state’s licensing rules.

The OCC provides a **National Database of Child Care Licensing Regulations** and resources to help states comply with federal standards.

* **Health and Safety Guidelines (CDC and CFOC):**

What does it mean for a childcare center to be truly “safe”? The [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov/early-care/prevention/protecting-against-covid-19-and-other-infections-in-early-care-and-education-programs.html#:~:text=Protecting%20Against%20COVID,part%20of%20your%20normal%20operations) helps define that through national guidance on illness prevention, sanitation, and emergency protocols, especially during public health crises like COVID-19. Meanwhile, the Caring for Our Children standards, developed by pediatric and public health leaders, offer a gold standard for everything from nutrition to injury prevention. States often turn to these benchmarks when shaping their regulations because children deserve more than just minimums; they deserve the best.

* **Head Start Program Standards:**

What if we imagined a higher bar and then asked every childcare program to rise to meet it? That’s what the Head Start and Early Head Start programs have done. These federally funded models go well beyond licensing basics. They mandate lower child-to-teacher ratios, more individualized care, health screenings, and stronger educational credentials for staff. Even if a center isn’t part of Head Start, its performance standards influence how states define excellence. They serve as a blueprint for what can be, not just what has to be.

For example, [Head Start](https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GOVPUB-HE23_1100-PURL-LPS87072/pdf/GOVPUB-HE23_1100-PURL-LPS87072.pdf#:~:text=,However%2C%20EHS%20group) preschools must have no more than a **1:10 teacher-child ratio** with a maximum of 20 children in a class, and Early Head Start (serving infants/toddlers) uses a **1:4 ratio** (two teachers for eight infants/toddlers)[govinfo.gov](https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GOVPUB-HE23_1100-PURL-LPS87072/pdf/GOVPUB-HE23_1100-PURL-LPS87072.pdf#:~:text=,However%2C%20EHS%20group). Head Start also mandates comprehensive services (health screenings, family engagement) and higher teacher qualification standards. While not mandatory for non-Head Start programs, these federal standards inform quality initiatives in many states.