

Alabama Licensing Regulations for Child Care Centers and Nighttime Centers

In Alabama, legally operating child care centers can be licensed or exempt from licensure. The licensing authority is the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR). The health department, the fire department and the Department of Human Resources inspect child care centers before awarding licenses. Licenses are valid for two years and should be on display in the centers. Licensing is intended to set standards for operating a child care program. It is not a guarantee of high quality care. Parents have the right to visit centers at any time during operating hours. Providers exempt from licensure include centers operated by the following: religious or faith-based organizations, state agencies, local governments, military facilities and programs that operate less than 4 hours a day.

Child Care Concerns and Complaints

To report a licensing concern or ask if a center you are considering has had substantiated complaints, please contact DHR Child Care Services Division at 334-242-1425 or 1-866-528-1694. To review the complete DHR Minimum Standards manual for Child Care Centers and Nighttime Centers, please visit www.dhr.state.al.us.

Child Care Director Qualifications

The center director shall be at least 19 years of age and shall have at least 20 clock hours of training in administration and management and at least 4 clock hours of training in quality child care. In addition, the center director shall meet at least one of the following training categories:

120 clock hours of training in child care, a high school diploma or general education diploma (G.E.D.), and at least 12 months of working experience as a child care worker/teacher or as a director/program director in a licensed day care center or a Department approved setting. Training in child care shall include at least 20 clock hours in each of these areas: (a) child development; (b) health, safety and universal precautions; (c) quality child care and licensing; (d) the child care professional and the family; (e) language development; (f) positive discipline and guidance.

OR

A child development associate credential (CDA) or a certified child care professional certificate (CCP) from the National Child Care Association Inc. (NCCA) and a high school diploma or general education diploma (G.E.D.), and at least 12 months of working experience as a child care worker/teacher or as a director/program director in a licensed day care center or a Department approved setting.

OR

An associate degree in child development or early childhood education from a post-secondary school (technical, vocational, junior college) and at least 9 months of working experience as a child care worker/teacher or as a director/program director in a licensed day care center or a Department approved setting.

OR

A bachelor's degree in child development or early childhood education and at least 6 months of working experience as a child care worker/teacher or as a director/program director in a licensed day care center or a Department approved setting.

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Child Care Worker/Teacher Qualifications

Child care workers/teachers who have primary responsibility for the care of a group of children shall be at least 19 years of age and shall have a high school diploma or general education diploma (G.E.D.). Within 30 days after employment, child care teachers shall have at least 12 clock hours of training in child care and development through participation in workshops, meetings, videotapes, or one-to-one consultation, unless written documentation of prior equivalent training is on file. Training in child care shall include at least 1 hour in each of these areas: (a) child development; (b) health, safety and universal precautions; (c) quality child care and licensing; (d) the child care professional and the family; (e) language development; (f) positive discipline and guidance.

Aides/assistant teachers who assist with groups of children shall be at least 16 years of age and shall have at least an 8th grade education, work under the direct supervision of a person qualified as a child care worker/teacher and shall not be counted in the required staff-child ratio.

Health and Safety

Each child 2 months to lawful school age must have an Alabama Certificate of Immunization or a medical/religious exemption on file in the child care center. No child who appears ill may be admitted to the child care center. The center director must report suspected illness, injury or exposure to contagious disease to the parent/guardian. No medicine may be given to a child without a written and signed authorization from the parent/guardian. All medicine must be in the original container and in locked storage. In accordance with the American Academy of Pediatrics, all infants under 12 months should be placed on their backs to sleep, unless there is a note from a physician specifying otherwise. There must be a clearly posted list of emergency numbers and plans for care of children in emergency situations. At least one staff member with a current CPR/First Aid Certification must be in the center during operating hours. The center and grounds must be maintained in a clean and safe condition. All administrators, board members, teachers, assistants, substitutes, support staff and volunteers must complete a criminal background check.

Care of Children

The parent/guardian must sign each child in upon arrival and out upon departure every day. The parent/guardian must provide written authorization before the center may release the child to anyone else. Children must be supervised at all times. Feeding and napping schedules of infants shall be planned with the parent/guardian. Breakfast or a morning snack, a mid-day meal and one afternoon snack must be provided each day. The menus should be posted. Children should spend time outdoors each day when weather permits. There should be a posted schedule and a variety of age appropriate indoor and outdoor activities for preschool and school-age children. A variety of age appropriate toys, games and play equipment should be available to the children. Corporal/physical punishment, verbal abuse and physical restraint are prohibited.

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Staff to Child Ratio - Centers Providing Daytime Care

Required Staff to Child Ratios in Child Care Centers (maintained at all times)

0 up to 18 months	1 teacher to 5 children
18 months up to 2-1/2 years	1 teacher to 7 children
24 months up to 36 months	1 teacher to 8 children
2-1/2 years up to 4 years	1 teacher to 11 children
4 years up to school age*	1 teacher to 18 children
School age* up to 8 years	1 teacher to 21 children
8 years and older	1 teacher to 22 children

**The term "school age" in this context refers to children of lawful school age who are enrolled in public or private school.*

Required Staff to Child Ratios during Napping/Resting

0 up to 12 months	1 teacher to 5 children
18 months up to 2-1/2 years	1 teacher to 14 children
2-1/2 years and older	1 teacher to 36 children

At least one person who meets child care worker qualifications shall be present in each room where children are napping/resting. Staff shall be able to see all the children in the room.

Staff to Child Ratio - Centers Providing Nighttime Care

Required staff to child ratios and groupings for day care centers shall be maintained while children are awake. Children shall be supervised at all times.

Staff to Child Ratio for Sleeping Children in Nighttime Child Care

0 up to 18 months	1 teacher to 5 children
18 months up to 2-1/2 years	1 teacher to 14 children
2-1/2 years up to 4 years	1 teacher to 18 children
4 years and older	1 teacher to 25 children

At least one person shall be present in each room of sleeping children. Staff shall be able to see children at all times.

At least one person who is at least 19 years of age, who meets child care worker qualifications and has current Infant-Child CPR, shall be present at the center. All staff on duty shall be awake and alert to the needs of the children. There shall be at least two staff persons age 19 or older available in the center building or on the premises whenever children are present. The nighttime schedule shall be posted. Outdoor time shall be available to children during daylight hours. Any child who goes directly to school from the center shall be served breakfast unless breakfast is eaten at school. An evening meal shall be served to children. If a child is bathed, clean water, individual bar of soap, towel and washcloth shall be provided for each child. Each child should be bathed separately and be supervised while bathing.

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Documents you should see posted in the center

- Most recent license, permit or approval from DHR
- Public notice form
- Most recent licensing evaluation form
- Most recent deficiency report, if applicable
- Corrective or adverse action notices, if applicable
- Most recent fire inspection report
- Most recent health department inspection report and food permit or written permission from health department to cater food
- Menu for meals and snacks
- Emergency names and telephone numbers for fire department, law enforcement, medical assistance, poison control center and substitute help
- Emergency procedures

Questions you should ask when visiting a Child Care Center

- Are you licensed or exempt from licensure?
- How many children will be in my child's group?
- How long has the teacher who will take care of my child worked at the center?
- What training requirements do you have for your teachers?
- How will you help my child adjust to your center?
- How will you let me know about my child's day?
- How do you handle medical, fire and weather emergencies?
- May I drop in and visit at any time?
- What happens when my child's teacher is sick or on vacation?
- What safety precautions do you take when children go on field trips or are transported by bus or van?
- What fees do you charge and when are they due?

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

Alabama law is clear on reporting abuse and neglect of children under the age of 18. If you are someone who comes in regular contact with children – physician, teacher, social worker, nurse, child care worker – you should be aware of your legal obligation to report such incidents of suspected or obvious child abuse or neglect. If you are a concerned citizen, neighbor, friend or family member who is aware of such incidents, you should make a report to those who can take action. All Childcare Resources employees are mandated reporters. To report suspected child abuse and neglect please call:

Blount County	205-274-5200
Jefferson County	205-918-5100
Shelby County	205-669-3000
Walker County	205-387-5400