

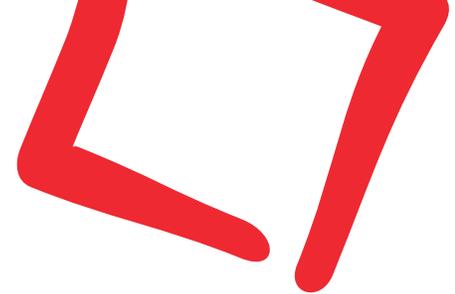


Washington State Department of
Early Learning

Licensed Child Care in Washington State

A GUIDE FOR CHILD CARE PROVIDERS





At the Department of Early Learning (DEL), we work every day to help make sure children in Washington grow up safe, healthy, and ready to succeed in school and life. If you are a licensed child care provider, or want to become one, that is your job too!

Licensed child care providers are business owners. They want to use and build on their knowledge of child development, and meet our state’s health and safety rules. This guide answers common questions about:

- > How to become a licensed provider.
- > How DEL staff will work with you as a licensed provider.
- > Your rights and responsibilities as a licensed provider.
- > Resources to support you as a business owner.
- > State laws and rules about licensed child care.

Kids’ Potential, Our Purpose!

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Getting licensed



Why should I get licensed? Most people who care for children on a regular basis are required by state law to be licensed by DEL. Getting a child care license shows parents that you meet the state standards to help ensure children are in a safe and healthy environment. Plus, as a licensed provider, you will have training opportunities and support to help you as a business owner.

Do I need a license? You need a license to provide child care if:

- › You are caring for a child or children who are not related to you (except a close relative); and
- › The care is on an ongoing, regularly scheduled basis for the purpose of engaging in business.

Caregivers who are not legally required to be licensed include parents who informally and infrequently exchange child care and family, friends and neighbors who provide occasional care.

How do I get licensed? Start by participating in a licensing orientation. You can find information about licensing orientations at www.del.wa.gov.

During the orientation, you will learn about:

- › How to get licensed.
- › State rules to help make sure you offer safe, healthy care.
- › Local resources to help you succeed as a licensed child care provider.
- › Continuing education requirements.

After you complete the orientation, you will fill out a licensing application and submit it with a licensing application fee. A DEL licensor will work with you to review your business plan, visit your facility and complete the licensing process. DEL is allowed 90 days to respond to your application and decide whether to issue you an initial child care license.



Washington State Department of
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Is this job for me?

Providing child care is both rewarding and challenging. Here are some things to think about when deciding whether this is the job for you:

- › Can you set firm guidelines for children AND adults?
- › How do you feel about spending long hours with several children?
- › How do you plan to take care of yourself physically and emotionally?
- › Are you open to other families' cultures and lifestyles?
- › Can you pass a background check?

For family home providers:

- › How does your spouse/partner feel about you offering child care in your home?
- › Are your family members willing to make their home a public place?
- › Will your children understand that you will be giving a lot of attention to other children?
- › Will your children be able to share their space and toys?
- › Do you have a plan for if you or your own children get sick?
- › Do you have funding to start your own business, including equipment, licensing fees and any remodeling you may need to do?
- › Does your neighborhood or landlord allow you to run a business from your home?
- › The public will have access to your child care licensing file kept by the State of Washington. Are you willing to make your business open to public disclosure?
- › Do you or any of your household members have a pending or past criminal history that would disqualify you from working in child care?
- › Do you have an outdoor play area at your home that you are willing and able to fence and to modify in accordance with child care licensing rules?

Steps to getting licensed

Getting a child care license takes time and preparation. Here are the basic steps.



Step 1

Participate in a DEL licensing orientation. Visit our website at www.del.wa.gov to find the right orientation for the type of facility you want to operate.

Step 2

Create a business plan for becoming a licensed child care provider. Think about getting insurance and business licenses; marketing your business; and buying equipment, such as books, games, toys and cribs (See Resources, page 7).

Step 3

Submit your completed licensing application and fee to your local DEL office (find contact information at www.del.wa.gov).

Step 4

Sign up for the required number of hours of STARS classes, which you can find in **MERIT** (see page 8). Sign up for other required classes, which include CPR, first aid and HIV/AIDS/bloodborne pathogen training. You can find these classes at local hospitals, your **local Red Cross chapter** and **county health departments**.

Family home child care providers must have these classes completed before they receive their initial license; child care centers must complete these classes within six months of receiving a license.

Step 5

Start the process of getting a background check for yourself, your staff and anyone age 13 or older who lives in your home if you plan to become a family home child care provider. Find more information at www.del.wa.gov.

Step 6

Get tuberculosis (TB) tests for all center staff; and for family home providers, household members ages 16 and older and all assistants ages 14 and older.

Step 7

Create a personnel file for yourself and all assistants, even if your assistants are family members. You can find a list of items to include in the file in Washington Administrative Code (find licensing rules at: www.del.wa.gov/laws/rules/licensing.aspx).

Step 8

Work with your DEL licensor to get your facility ready!



Why does DEL run background checks on my staff and me? By state law, DEL must run background checks on anyone who will work with or be around children in licensed child care facilities. This helps make sure licensed providers offer safe, healthy care for children.

DEL will look at a person's criminal history, character, and child abuse and neglect history. Background checks are "portable," which means they stay with the person rather than the child care facility. They are valid for three years.

Background checks and, in some cases, fingerprinting, will be done for:

- › You.
- › Any staff who work with you.
- › If you are a family home child care provider, anyone who lives in your home who is 13 or older.

Your DEL licensor can help you with the background check process.



TYPES OF LICENSES

An **initial license** is a six-month license that allows a provider to offer care while DEL decides whether the provider can meet the state licensing rules over time. A provider may have up to four six-month initial licenses if progress is being made.

A **full, nonexpiring license** may be issued when DEL decides a provider meets state licensing rules. Licenses do not expire as long as the license is in good standing and providers submit fees and forms on time.

Licensed child care facilities

Family home child care providers offer care in the home where they live. Depending on their license, family home providers may care for up to 12 children through 12 years old. DEL licensors conduct monitoring visits at least once every 18 months.

Child care centers offer care in commercial, privately owned, school- or faith-based spaces. Depending on their license, child care center providers may care for children ages one month through 12 years. DEL licensors conduct monitoring visits at least once a year.

School-age programs offer care for children ages 5 through 12 when school is not in session. School-age programs are often located on school grounds, in a commercial space or privately owned space in a faith-based facility. DEL licensors conduct monitoring visits at least once a year.

Child care referrals

Child Care Aware of Washington is contracted by DEL to provide child care referrals to families who are looking for licensed child care.



Families and parents can find child care referrals from Child Care Aware on their website at <http://childcareaware.org/parents-and-guardians> or by calling 1-800-424-2246.

Now that you're licensed...

How do I work with my DEL licensor? We want to work with you to help you offer high-quality care. DEL licensors have a variety of roles. As a licensed provider, you can expect your licensor to:

- › Share information about child care quality, safety and health, and child development.
- › Connect you with local business and early learning resources.
- › Monitor your facility to help make sure you are meeting state licensing rules.
- › Follow up if DEL gets complaints about your facility, and work with you to create a plan to fix any issues.
- › Be available for your questions.
- › Take action to help ensure children are in a safe and healthy environment in accordance with Washington laws and rules.



How do I find training and other ways to improve quality? Caring for children is not always easy! DEL and our partners around the state offer many ways for you to learn and grow.

Child care center directors, program supervisors and some staff must finish required STARS training within six months of being licensed or hired. Family home child care providers must complete the required STARS training before receiving a license. All providers and certain staff must complete a certain amount training each year after that.

To learn more about STARS, professional development opportunities, scholarships, classes and other ways for you to continue your education, talk to your licensor or visit www.del.wa.gov.

How does DEL set the licensing rules I follow? DEL's mission is to develop, implement and coordinate system oversight to early learning policy and programs that create safe, healthy, nurturing learning experiences for all Washington children. We do this by setting rules under the law that clearly lay out what is expected of providers. These rules are called Washington Administrative Code, or WAC.

Licensing rules affect you as a business owner, and they affect the children in your care. We want to make sure all voices are heard during the rulemaking process, including providers. Before we make rule changes, DEL files public notices, holds public hearings and accepts written comments at rules@del.wa.gov.

You can find all DEL child care licensing rules and laws at www.del.wa.gov/laws/rules/licensing.aspx.



What should I expect during a DEL monitoring visit?

Your licensor will do a monitoring visit at least once every 12 months if you're a child care center provider or school-age program; and at least once every 18 months if you're a family home child care provider. You will not know about this visit ahead of time.

Your licensor will start by talking with you about the visit and what it will include. You can find the monitoring checklist your licensor will use at: www.del.wa.gov/publications/licensing.

During the visit, your licensor will do many things including:

- › Review your files to make sure your records are up-to-date.
- › Sit quietly and watch the way you and your staff interact with children.
- › Look at the spaces where you prepare food.
- › Look at the play area and toys, books and games.
- › Look at the diaper-changing areas.
- › Look at your outdoor space.

If any health or safety issues come up during the visit, your licensor will work with you to create a plan for improving them. These plans are called facility licensing compliance agreements (FLCAs) and they are posted on **Child Care Check**, DEL's child care licensing information system. You will be asked to sign the compliance agreement. Make sure the plan of action is clear for both you and your licensor. If you have any questions or concerns about the compliance agreement, talk to your licensor, or check the box on the compliance agreement asking for a supervisory review. You may also write comments on the compliance agreement.

Monitoring visits should be a time for you and your licensor to talk freely about your program. During any visit from your DEL licensor, you should be treated as a respected business owner and should feel free to ask for any information and support you need. If at any time you do not feel that way, please talk with your licensor about it, or ask for the phone number of your licensor's supervisor to share your concerns. You may contact a regional administrator if you have further concerns.



What should I expect during a DEL complaint inspection?

If DEL licensors believe children are at risk, they will take immediate action. When licensors receive a complaint from a parent or others, they will visit the licensed facility. Your licensor will talk with you and your staff, and look at your facility and your records to decide whether the complaint is valid. If it is a valid complaint, your licensor will work with you to create a compliance agreement to address the issue.

If the complaint is about suspected child abuse or neglect, DEL will work with staff from the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) Division of Licensed Resources/Child Protective Services (DLR/CPS). DLR/CPS will conduct a child abuse and neglect *investigation*, sometimes with law enforcement officials, while DEL completes a licensing complaint *inspection*.

You should feel free to ask your licensor questions during the complaint inspection. Your licensor will explain the purpose of the inspection before starting.

If a compliance agreement is put in place, your licensor will follow up with you to make sure the issues are fixed. If you have any questions or concerns about the compliance agreement, talk to your licensor, or check the box on the compliance agreement asking for a supervisory review. You will receive a letter from DEL informing you of the licensor's decision.

Compliance agreements that result from valid licensing complaints are posted at: www.del.wa.gov/check.

What if I don't agree with a licensor's decision? If your licensor determines a complaint is valid and you don't agree, you may ask for a supervisory review. You will receive a letter from DEL informing you that the complaint was found to be valid, which includes instructions for requesting a review. You will need to send a copy of the letter with a detailed explanation as to why you believe the complaint finding is not correct to your licensor or the supervisor within 10 business days. You can ask for a review from a licensing supervisor, then a regional administrator, then the statewide licensing administrator. At each step, you will get something in writing telling you the decision. The statewide licensing administrator's decision is final.

What licensing actions may DEL take? Washington parents must be able to trust that a child care license means their children are in a safe, healthy place. If DEL decides a licensed provider is not able to offer safe, healthy care that helps ensure children's well-being, we may take action in the following ways:

Modification—DEL may change a license if needed to meet licensing requirements.

Summary suspension—If the health or safety of children in a licensed facility is at risk, DEL may immediately suspend a license so the provider may not offer care while the facility is investigated or inspected.

Probation—DEL may offer a probationary license to a provider who is unable to meet a licensing rule or has been the subject of several complaints that do not pose an immediate risk to children.

Denial of license—If a DEL licensor decides a provider cannot meet licensing rules while the initial license is in place, DEL may deny that provider a full license.

Do not refer—If licensors have questions about whether a provider is able to meet licensing rules or there is a DLR/CPS complaint, DEL may place a provider on "do not refer" status. This means Child Care Aware of Washington would not refer families to this provider and the provider's status will reflect that in **Child Care Check**. (Of course, if children's health and/or safety are at risk, DEL will take other licensing action.)

Civil penalties—If a licensed facility does not meet licensing rules, DEL may fine the facility.

Revocation—If a provider has repeated or serious licensing violations that put children at risk, DEL may revoke the provider's license.

You may ask for a hearing if you are fined, disqualified from providing child care, your application is denied, or your license is suspended or revoked. More information is available on DEL's website at www.del.wa.gov/laws/Appeals/default.aspx.

DEL will send you or deliver a letter explaining any licensing action taken. The letter will explain what you can do if you disagree with DEL's decision.



Resources



Where can I find information to help me offer safe, healthy, fun care?

Children grow and learn so much in their earliest years. It is your job as a licensed provider to help them grow and learn! There are many places for you to get more information about child development. Child Care Aware of Washington, public libraries and the DEL website are a good start.

Your DEL licensor is a good source of information about:

- › How to talk to and play with children in your care.
- › How young children grow and learn.
- › How to make sure you're offering a safe, healthy, nurturing place for children.
- › How to get and use **The Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines**.
- › Local training and classes.

Where can I find information to help me as a business owner?

There are several websites that offer resources and information to help you plan, market and run your business. Here are just a few:

Business Resources for Providers
www.del.wa.gov/requirements/info/BusinessResources.aspx

Childcare.gov: Your official source for all U.S. government child care information
www.childcare.gov

Includes information on small business development, loan forgiveness programs, funding opportunities for child care programs and more.

The Internal Revenue Service Small Business and Self-Employed Tax Center
www.irs.gov/Businesses/Small-Businesses-&Self-Employed

Includes information on business expenses, recordkeeping and more.

Doing Business in Washington
<http://access.wa.gov/topics/business/>

Includes information on starting a business in Washington, hiring and managing employees, and more. Also includes links to other resources, including the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries Small Business Center, and the Washington State Department of Licensing.

The U.S. Small Business Administration
www.sba.gov

Includes information on writing a business plan, marketing your business and more.

Washington Small Business Development Center
www.wsbdc.org

Includes information on writing a business plan, conducting market research and more.



Early Achievers, MERIT, professional development

MERIT: Managed Education and Registry Information Tool is Washington's online tool for early learning professionals to find training, to track their career progress and obtain a portable background check.

- › Find more information on the [MERIT webpage](#).

Washington's Professional Development System helps early learning professionals find training and education that improves the quality of care they provide and helps them build a career path.

- › The [Washington State Early Learning and School-Age Career Lattice](#) has 15 steps, each of which represents increased training and education that aligns with the Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Professionals.
- › The [training library for early learning professionals](#) connects early learning professionals to resources, best practices, research and online training opportunities.
- › Child care providers can find [financial support](#) for continuing education.
- › Find out more on [DEL's website](#).



Early Achievers, Washington's quality rating and improvement system, is a voluntary, no-cost program that gives participating child care professionals access to coaching, professional development, and demonstrates providers' commitment to providing quality care and education for young children.

Early Achievers rates the quality of child care and early education programs. Higher ratings demonstrate a track record of delivering high-quality care. Providers can move up the rating scale by completing milestones and gaining points through an evaluation.

Child care providers who participate in Early Achievers get resources and supports to help them with their quality improvements.

- › Free training that is offered online and in person.
- › Free technical assistance through your local Child Care Aware agency.
- › Peer support from child care providers who participated in the field test and have volunteered to share their time and expertise with new participants.
- › Coaching that provides targeted, ongoing assistance and support.
- › Financial incentives including scholarships, grants, quality improvement awards and tiered subsidy reimbursements based on the facility's rating.

For more information, visit www.del.wa.gov/care/qris.



Child care subsidies

Several state child care subsidy programs help eligible families with children pay child care costs. The most common is the **Working Connections Child Care** (WCCC) program, which helps eligible families pay for child care while they work or participate in other approved activities. Other programs include help for families who are homeless or seasonal workers, or through specific Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) programs.

Child care providers who accept children who receive subsidies must bill the state for the children's care. DEL produces guides that help child care providers accurately bill the state for caring for children who receive subsidies.

In addition, DSHS operates a WCCC Provider line to help people who bill the state:

- › Check the status of a WCCC application or review.
- › Check payment authorization or billing, such as, hours of care, units or payment type.
- › Provide information about your rates.
- › Report a mistake on a current authorization.

The WCCC provider line is automated and available in English or Spanish 24 hours per day to:

- › Check the family's authorization, copayment, case status and effective dates of coverage.
 - › Information is only available after the case has been processed.
 - › If the parent's eligibility has not been determined, the information will not be available on the WCIP.



Related information

- › Information about **Working Connections Child Care**
- › **Subsidy information for providers**
- › **Department of Social and Health Services**



DEL office locations

- | | |
|--------------|--------------|
| Aberdeen | Port Angeles |
| Bellevue | Seattle |
| Bellingham | Spokane |
| Bremerton | Tacoma |
| Everett | Tri-Cities |
| Kelso | Tumwater |
| Kent | Vancouver |
| Mount Vernon | Wenatchee |
| Olympia | Yakima |



My licensor

Name _____

Phone _____

Email _____

My licensing supervisor

Name _____

Phone _____

Email _____

If you think a child is being abused or neglected,
call toll-free **1.866.END.HARM**



CONTACT US

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