

WAC 110-300-0356 Center capacity, ratio, and group size. (1)

The department issues initial or nonexpiring center early learning provider licenses. The department will not issue a center license to care for more children than permitted by the rules in this chapter. The department may issue a license to care for fewer than the maximum allowable enrolled children. For each center, licenses state:

(a) The maximum number of children that may be in care at any one time (total capacity);

(b) The licensed capacity for each space within the center licensed for use by children; and

(c) The age range of children allowed in care.

(2) The department determines capacity for a center early learning program after considering:

(a) Square footage of the early learning program;

(b) A provider's education and ongoing training;

(c) The age range of children requested or approved by the department;

(d) The amount of developmentally appropriate equipment, materials, and toys an early learning program can provide children to use;

(e) A provider's licensing history with the department; and

(f) The number of qualified staff available to meet staff-to-child ratios.

(3) A center licensee must not exceed the total capacity or age range stated on the child care license at any time except as provided in this section. All children on the premises, signed in to child care, on an off-site trip from the early learning program, or being transported by the early learning program staff are counted in capacity including the children of staff.

(a) A center licensee must receive department approval to care for a child with special needs, pursuant to WAC 110-300-0300, if the child is older than the maximum age identified on the license. A child with documented special needs may be in care up to age nineteen and must be counted in capacity and staff-to-child ratio.

(b) A child with special needs who requires individualized supervision pursuant to WAC 110-300-0300 does not count in the staff-to-child ratio.

(c) A child who turns thirteen years old permitted by chapter 110-15 WAC must be counted in both capacity and staff-to-child ratio.

(4) A center licensee must provide qualified staff to fulfill staffing requirements, staff-to-child ratios, group size, and mixed age grouping during operating hours, including off-site activities or when transporting children in care.

(5) In each classroom or well-defined space, the maximum group size and ratio of center staff members to children, including children related to staff or the licensee, must be:

(a) Infants (birth through eleven months of age) with a:

(i) Maximum group size of eight with a ratio of one staff to four children (1:4);

(ii) Maximum group size of nine with a ratio of 1:3.

(b) Toddlers (twelve through twenty-nine months of age) with a:

(i) Maximum group size of fourteen with a ratio of 1:7;

(ii) Maximum group size of fifteen with a ratio of 1:5.

(c) Preschoolers (thirty months through six years of age who are not attending kindergarten or elementary school) with a maximum group size of twenty with a ratio of 1:10; and

(d) School-age children (five years through twelve years of age who are enrolled in or attending kindergarten or elementary school) with a maximum group size of thirty with a ratio of 1:15.

(6) A center licensee may combine children of different age groups for periods of no more than the first two hours of the day or the last two hours of the day, not to exceed two hours in any given day, provided the staff-to-child ratio and group size designated for the youngest child in the mixed group are maintained.

(7) Children at least five years old and enrolled in or attending kindergarten may be a part of the preschool or school-age group if developmentally appropriate and the child's parent or guardian agrees to this placement.

(8) A center licensee must conduct activities for each group of children in a specific room or other defined space within a larger area.

(9) A center licensee must provide additional staff as described in WAC 110-300-0350 when children are participating in water activities or activities near water.

(10) When only one center staff is required to care for the only group of children on-site for up to an hour at the beginning or end of the day, the center licensee must ensure:

(a) That staff member provides an appropriate level of supervision at all times to the children in care;

(b) That staff member is free of all other duties while providing care to children; and

(c) A second individual with a cleared background check is on-site and readily available to respond if needed, or the department approves an alternate plan.

[WSR 18-15-001, recodified as § 110-300-0356, filed 7/5/18, effective 7/5/18. Statutory Authority: RCW 43.215.070, 43.215.201 and chapter 42.56 RCW. WSR 18-14-079, § 170-300-0356, filed 6/30/18, effective 8/1/19.]