



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

Dear Potential Child Day Center Applicant,

Thank you for your interest in applying for a license to operate a child day center in Virginia. As a child care provider you will have a tremendous opportunity to teach and care for young children, support your community and shape the future. But you will first want to make sure that opening a child care business is best for you and the needs of your community. Be informed and have a plan!

Before you embark on a journey into child care, consider these questions:

- Do you understand the definition of a licensed child day center?
Child day center (CDC): a child day program offered to (i) two or more children under the age of 13 in a facility that is not the residence of the provider or any of the children in care or (ii) 13 or more children at any location. If your program meets the definition of a child day program you must obtain a license before beginning operation.
- How do you know if providing childcare is a good fit for you? Do you have:
 - a passion for the quality care and education of children
 - the ability to provide a safe environment
 - good physical and emotional health
 - an understanding of children's developmental needs
 - patience with children and their families
 - good communication skills with staff, children, and their families
 - the ability to understand good business practices
 - good organization skills

Have you read the *Standards for Licensed Child Day Centers, General Procedures and Information for Licensure, and Background Checks for Child Welfare Agencies*
https://www.dss.virginia.gov/facility/child_care/licensed/child_day_centers/index.cgi

Do you have a plan in place to ensure that you will maintain compliance with these standards?

- Before leasing, renting, or purchasing a building, have you considered all applicable regulations and local ordinances?

Particular attention should be given to the program's facility location. The site of your facility is of primary importance to the success of the operation. Renovations to existing buildings to make them suitable for child care can be costly. Caution should be taken to avoid selecting a site before assessing costs of renovations or improvements. Before a child care center can operate, it must pass all building, fire and sanitation inspections.

- Have you studied the area to see if there is a need for a child day center?

You will want to research the need for service in your community which is critical to success. Having a "feeling" about what is needed cannot substitute for having the facts.

- Have you planned financially for the opening and continued operation and maintenance of the child day center?
- Have you developed a budget for the center?

Plan carefully. Expenses that are not anticipated or are underestimated can unexpectedly affect your budget. Licensing requirements, such as staff qualifications, space requirements and equipment requirements can have a major impact on budgeting.

- Have you looked into the required liability insurance?
- Are you aware of the building, fire, and environmental health requirements required for licensing?

Check with local inspectors to be sure the building will comply with fire, sanitation, and building codes and zoning requirements before you plan to rent, lease or purchase a building.

- Have you identified a qualified program director with the appropriate education and experience to operate a child day center?

Some key skills to look for when hiring a program director:

- The ability to plan and implement a developmentally appropriate care and education program for children and families
- The ability to develop and maintain an effective organization
- The ability to plan and implement administrative systems that effectively carry out the program's mission, goals, and objectives
- The ability to administer effectively a program of personnel management and staff development

- Do you have a plan to meet all the requirements for staffing and training?

The better qualified your staff is, the more attractive they and your service is to prospective customers. Your caregivers should have an understanding of child development and training in early childhood education to make them sensitive and responsive to all the children in their care.

If you are ready to take the next step in the application process, please begin with the *Steps to Apply for an Initial Child Day Center License*.

The Division of Licensing Programs appreciates your efforts to provide childcare to families in Virginia. We look forward to working with you as you strive to provide quality childcare to families in your community! The Division of Licensing – Children's Programs offers information on training, resources, and professional development opportunities. This information will be an invaluable resource for you and your childcare business. Please contact the VDSS licensing office in your region if you have any questions or need more information.

http://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/licensing/contacts/dolp_district_children.pdf

Good luck in planning your child care program.

