

Using Regulated Child Care in Vermont



A Booklet for Parents



Child Development Division

Introduction

No one can ever replace the loving care and attention you give your child. Yet when you cannot be there, you still want your child to be safe and feel special. Safe child care may provide that for your child.

Vermont has basic health and safety regulations for child care. This booklet provides a brief overview of some of the expectations of the following regulated programs:

- Family child care homes; and
- Center-based programs, such as early childhood, preschool, and afterschool programs.

This is not a complete list of regulations. For more information and a complete list of regulations, please visit <http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd> or call 1-800-649-2642.

Regulated child care, preschool, and afterschool care means a program has been 1) authorized to operate by Vermont's Child Development Division; and 2) is expected to meet minimum health, safety, and program standards set by Vermont law and regulations.

Regulated programs include:

- Licensed Early Childhood Programs;
- Licensed Family Child Care Homes;
- Licensed School Age Programs;
- Registered Home Child Care Programs; and
- Licensed Non-Recurring Child Care Programs.

For more information about these programs, please visit <http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd> or call 1-800-649-2642.

Table of Contents

Building a Relationship	2
Things To Tell Your Provider	2
A Partnership With Your Provider	3
Concerns About The Care Your Child Receives	3
When Your Child Is Sick	4
Questions or Concerns	5
Basic Regulations	6
Health & Safety	6
Immunizations	7
Guidance & Discipline	8
Number of Children Allowed	9
Program	11
Records Checks	12
Supervision	13
Training and Education	13
Licensing Visits	14
Going Beyond the Basics...	15
Accreditation	15
Vermont STARS Program	15
Other Sources of Help	16

Building a Relationship

Things To Tell Your Provider

Talk with the person caring for your child every day. This is important for both of you. It helps keep the lines of communication open; helps you stay in touch with what your child is doing while in child care; and makes it easier for you and your provider to talk about any concerns that come up.

The person caring for your child needs to:

- Know about your child;
- Be paid on time for providing care; and
- Take care of herself or himself and their own family when the work day is done.

When you drop your child off at child care:

- Tell the caregiver about your child's night or anything else of importance that happened since the last time she was in care;
- Ask what the plans are for the day; and
- Help your child put away her things and settle in.

When you pick your child up from child care:

- Allow some time to talk to your provider;
- Ask how the day went (e.g., what your child did, what she ate, and when she napped); and
- Ask your child about the fun things she did that day.

If you have several questions or concerns, you may want to schedule a more convenient time to talk.

A Partnership With Your Provider

- Meet with your provider regularly and ask questions.
- Offer to volunteer time when needed, such as participating in clean-up days, fixing broken toys, or helping with a newsletter.
- Visit your child care and read a book to the children.
- Participate in special events like field trips and holiday celebrations.

Participating in events at child care will demonstrate to your provider the importance of your child and the work they do together.

Concerns About The Care Your Child Receives

No matter how wonderful the person caring for your child is, at some point he or she may do something you do not understand or like. When you talk with your child care provider about your concerns, try to:

- Begin with what you like about the care your child receives;
- Explain why you are concerned;
- Ask for information about what concerns you; and
- Offer to work with the person to resolve the issue.



When Your Child Is Sick

Child care licensing regulations include guidelines providers follow for sick children. Providers may also have their own policies about sick children attending their program, which may exceed regulation guidelines. Below are some examples of when your child should stay home.

Keep your child at home when he:

- Has chicken pox;
- Has a fever of 101 or over;
- Has diarrhea;
- Is vomiting;
- Has strep throat; or
- Is not able to participate in group activities.

Most providers cannot provide sick children with the one-on-one care they need; the providers need to be able to meet the needs of all the children in their care.

When your child is uncomfortable because of an illness, it is best that he stay home. Remember, your child will be more comfortable at home, and may not behave as sick as he would if he were not with you. A sick child who cries all day at child care may be happy and laughing at home.

It is common for germs to be shared when children are in groups. All sick policies are created to protect children and child care providers from getting seriously ill.

One of the best ways to prevent illness and the spread of sickness is to wash your hands frequently with soap and water.

Questions or Concerns

If you have questions or concerns about child care in Vermont, call the Child Care Consumer Line at 1-800-649-2642 (toll free in Vermont) or (802) 241-1561 from other locations.

Information You Can Access By Calling:

- A specific provider's public record, including when he or she became licensed, accreditations, STep Ahead Recognition System rating, whether there have been substantiated violations to the child care licensing regulations;
- Information about looking for child care; and
- Information about child care training, credentials, accreditation, and quality incentives for child care providers.

Some Typical Concerns:

- Lack of supervision;
- Too many children;
- Unqualified or not enough staff;
- Inappropriate guidance and discipline;
- Unsafe environment; and
- Unregulated child care.



Basic Regulations

Health & Safety

It is important for children to be in clean, safe, and healthy environments.

What You Can Expect From Your Child Care:

You can expect the children to be protected from things that might harm them.

You should see:

- Covers on all electrical outlets;
- Tipping hazards such as bookcases secured;
- Locks on the cabinets;
- Access to wood stoves/fireplaces blocked;
- Gates or fencing around pools;
- No exposed asbestos or lead paint in the building; and
- No smoking in the presence of children in care.

Additionally:

- When a provider transports your child in a vehicle, he or she must have your permission and must follow all Vermont transportation laws (i.e. children must be properly restrained).
- The child care program should have an emergency evacuation plan posted and practice that plan monthly. It must also have properly functioning smoke detectors and appropriate fire extinguishers or a sprinkler system.
- The program must have a first aid kit and staff must be trained in CPR and first aid.

Immunizations

In the State of Vermont, children in regulated child care are required to have received age-appropriate immunizations — unless their family is exempt due to medical, religious, or moral/philosophical reasons. Child care providers are required to have proof of either immunization or exemption from immunization.

This can be done at the time of enrollment by providing your child care provider with a copy of your child's immunization record. Every time your child receives an additional immunization, you must provide an updated record to your provider.



Guidance & Discipline

All child care programs in Vermont need to follow guidance and discipline regulations, which may not match your style. Please discuss this with your child care provider.

Child care programs must use positive methods of guidance and discipline. This includes redirecting behavior and recognizing positive behavior. For example, when two children are fighting over a toy, the provider may offer one child another toy or engage both children in a different activity.

Guidance and discipline cannot include any form of cruel and unusual punishment, including corporal punishment such as, but not limited to:

- Hitting, shaking, biting, spanking or pinching;
- Restricting a child's movement by binding, tying, or using any other form of mechanical restraint;
- Withholding food, water, rest, or toilet use;
- Confining a child in an enclosed or darkened area such as a closet or locked room; or
- Inflicting mental or emotional punishment such as humiliating, shaming, threatening, or frightening a child.

Tell your provider about the guidance and discipline that you use at home so he or she will understand what your child is used to.

Number of Children Allowed

The number of children allowed varies, depending on the type of child care program your child attends. For specific information about how many children a provider/program is allowed to care for, please visit <http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd> or call 1-800-649-2642.

Registered Home Providers:

Typically, registered home providers can care for:

Six full-time children under 6 years old; and two of the six children can be under 2 years old.



They can also care for four part-time school-aged children every day.



There are other options for the number of children your provider may be following; see the registered home provider regulations for descriptions of these options. View them online at <http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd> or request a copy by calling 1-800-649-2642.

Licensed Early Childhood & Afterschool Programs:

Early childhood and afterschool programs are licensed for a specific number of children and operate under caregiver/child ratios and group sizes. If you have questions or concerns about the number of children your provider has in care, call 1-800-649-2642.

Licensed early childhood program

Children's Ages	Maximum Group Size	Staff:Child Ratio
6 Weeks - 23 Months	8	1:4
24 - 35 Months	10	1:5
3 Years - Kindergarten	20	1:10
1st Grade - 15 Years	No Maximum	1:13

Licensed afterschool programs

Children's Ages	Maximum Group Size	Staff: Child Ratio
Kindergarten	20	1:10
1st Grade - 15 Years	No Maximum	1:13



Program

There are many types of child care programs available to families in Vermont. Talk to your provider about the curriculum and activities planned for your child each day. While Vermont child care regulations do not require specific types of curriculum or activities, they do require a daily routine of developmentally-appropriate activities.

Child care programs should have a variety of suitable, safe, and age-appropriate equipment available. The daily schedule should include supervised time outside. Any television viewing the child care program allows must be time limited and designed for children.



Records Checks

All staff in licensed early childhood and afterschool programs must have criminal records checks. In regulated child care homes, everyone over the age of 16 who lives in the home, as well as any substitutes or helpers, must complete a records check process prior to being in the child care home.

The records check process includes a check of the:

- Vermont Criminal Information Center;
- Vermont Department for Children and Families' Child Protection Registry;
- Adult Abuse Registry; and
- Vermont Case Access System.

State regulations prohibit the following persons from operating, residing at, being employed at, or being present at a Vermont regulated child care program:

- Persons convicted of fraud, felony or an offense involving violence or unlawful sexual activity or other bodily injury to another person including, but not limited to, abuse, neglect or sexual activity with a child;
- Persons found by a court to have abused, neglected or mistreated a child or vulnerable adult; and
- Adults or children who have had a report of abuse or neglect substantiated against them under Chapters 49 and 69 of Title 33 Vermont Statutes Annotated.

Individuals prohibited from child care programs may request a variance from the Child Development Division. Variances must be approved by the Deputy Commissioner for the Division.

Supervision

Regulations define supervision as:

The knowledge of and accounting for the activity and whereabouts of each child in care and the proximity of staff to children at all times assuring immediate intervention of staff to safeguard a child from harm.

This means that your provider needs to know where your child is and what he is doing at all times.

Children should be attended to when they cry. This could mean the child care provider holds the child or stays close to the child, talking to her as appropriate.

Training and Education

You may want to ask your child care provider about his or her training and education. In Vermont, there are minimum annual training and education requirements for all providers working in regulated child care programs. Requirements vary depending on the person's position and the program type. Refer to the regulations for specific requirements for each program type.



Licensing Visits

Vermont's Child Development Division (CDD) is responsible for the licensing and oversight of all regulated child care programs.

Someone from CDD may visit a child care program for a variety of reasons. The reason for a visit may determine how often a program is visited.

- **Regulatory Compliance:** unannounced visits to ensure programs are meeting Vermont child care regulations happen on a regular basis. Licensed centers are typically visited once a year.
- **Technical Support:** visits to offer programs support and assistance around regulatory issues.
- **Investigations:** unannounced visits made to gather information when a complaint is made.

When a Program Receives a Violation(s):

Many times when a child care program is visited, the program will post the *Licensing Site Visit Form* where parents can see and read it.

Information about child care programs and regulatory information is available by calling Vermont's Child Care Consumer Line at 1-800-649-2642.

You can view recent regulatory violations on the Child Development Division's website at <http://www.brightfutures.dcf.state.vt.us>.

Additional information about violations is available by calling the Child Care Consumer Line at 1-800-649-2642.

Going Beyond The Basics...

Accreditation

Child care programs can become accredited. This means they have demonstrated to a national organization that they go above and beyond the basic regulations. There are several organizations that accredit child care programs, including:

- National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC);
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC);
- National Afterschool Association (NAA); and
- National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA).

Vermont STARS Program

Vermont has a quality recognition system for child care programs called STARS (STep Ahead Recognition System). Programs that participate in STARS are stepping ahead. They are going beyond the regulations to provide professional services and improve quality — to meet the needs of children and families.

Programs receive one to five stars based on points earned in five areas: 1) regulatory history, 2) staff qualifications and training, 3) family and community involvement, 4) program assessment, and 5) administration.

Ask your child care provider about specific STARS achievements. It can be interesting and informative to discuss areas of strength, as well as plans for continued improvement.

Other Sources of Help

Vermont 2-1-1

A program of the United Way of Vermont, 2-1-1 is a health and human services information and referral program. For assistance, dial 2-1-1 or visit www.vermont211.org

Children's Integrated Services

For information about services for children with developmental delays or concerns, call the Children's Integrated Services Unit of the Child Development Division at 1-800-649-2642.

Child Care Consumer Line

If you have questions or concerns about child care, call the Child Care Consumer Line at 1-800-649-2642.

Child Care Financial Assistance Program

For information about this program, which helps income-eligible families with the cost of child care, call 1-800-649-2642 or visit

http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/child_care_financial_assistance

Special thanks to the parents at the Addison County Parent Child Center for providing their honest feedback during the writing of this publication.

Community Child Care Support Agencies

<p>ADDISON Mary Johnson Children's Center (802) 388-4304</p>	<p>BENNINGTON Bennington County Child Care Association (802) 447-3778</p>
<p>CALEDONIA/ESSEX Kingdom Child Care Connection at Umbrella (802) 748-1992 1-800-916-8645</p>	<p>CHITTENDEN Child Care Resource (802) 863-3367 1-800-339-3367</p>
<p>FRANKLIN/GRAND ISLE Family Center of Northwestern Vermont (802) 524-6554 1-800-427-6574</p>	<p>LAMOILLE Lamoille Family Center (802) 888-5229</p>
<p>ORANGE/WINDSOR (N) The Family Place (802) 649-3268, 1-800-639-0039 Child Care Project (cc referrals) (603) 646-3233, 1-800-323-5446</p>	<p>ORLEANS/ESSEX (N) NEK Community Action Inc (802) 334-4072 1-877-722-6680</p>
<p>RUTLAND Child Care Support Services / Vermont Achievement Center (802) 747-0033 1-800-775-2390</p>	<p>WASHINGTON Family Center of Washington County (802) 262-3292</p>
<p>WINDHAM Windham Child Care Assoc. (802) 254-5332 1-866-254-5332</p>	<p>WINDSOR (SOUTH)/ WINDHAM (NORTH) Springfield Area Parent Child Center (802) 886-5242 1-800-808-4442</p>

The Department for Children and Families,
as part of an integrated Agency of Human Services,
fosters the healthy development, safety,
well-being, and self-sufficiency of Vermonters.

The Child Development Division (CDD)
improves the well-being of Vermont's children
by ensuring safe, accessible child development
services and integrated family support services.

This booklet was produced by CDD,
in collaboration with our state
and community partners.

Child Development Division
103 South Main St.
Waterbury, VT 05671-2901
1-800-649-2642

dcf.vermont.gov/cdd