

# Child:Early Childhood Educator Ratios



## The Key to Quality

Why lower child:early childhood educator ratios?

Low child:early childhood educator ratios are...

- ❖ consistently connected with higher-quality care and **positive child outcomes**, including higher social competence, communication and language skills, and cognitive development.
- ❖ associated with **more direct, warm social interactions** between adults and children and therefore more secure relationships. Decades of research in human development confirms that positive early relationships with caregivers are the foundation for lifetime health and wellbeing.
- ❖ correlated with **fewer situations that threaten children's physical safety**, including situations related to both an adult's capacity for supervision and loss of self-control.

Low child:early childhood educator ratios ensure that...

- ❖ children may receive the **one-on-one attention** needed to feel safe, loved, and ready to explore. When child care professionals care for a smaller number of children, they engage in more positive caregiving behavior, including engaging in physical contact, responding promptly to needs, encouraging development, talking, singing, and reading. This is most critical for infants and toddlers, who require more adult guidance to feel emotionally regulated and secure in their surroundings.
- ❖ adults may provide **safety** in life-threatening situations. The National Fire Protection Association requires in the NFPA 101: Life Safety code that family child care homes serve no more than two children incapable of self-preservation.

I want to learn more!

# Caring for Our Children

National Health and Safety Performance Standards Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs

FOURTH EDITION

American Academy of Pediatrics | APHA PRESS | National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education

## Wisconsin Child Care Ratios

"While it may seem like a good idea to simply add more children to a childcare facility, especially if the state-mandated ratios have changed, careful consideration should be given to the potential solution. If children are ultimately less safe and teachers are burning out faster, increasing ratios won't help the childcare crisis at all!" - *Wendy Boyd Insurance*

**Potential impacts of high staff-child ratios in child care:**

- Increased stress levels of caregivers resulting in loss of the caregiver's self-control\*
- Inability to provide safety in life-threatening situations such as a fire (e.g., the National Fire Protection Association requires in the NFPA 101 Life Safety Code that small family child care homes serve no more than two clients incapable of self-protection)\*\*
- Increased levels of stress

**Why are lower staff-child ratios important?**

- Are associated with fewer situations that threaten children's safety
- Help ensure children receive adequate care and supervision
- Set the stage for high-quality interactions between caregivers and children that can promote children's well-being\*

**Public law requires states to establish standards for staff-to-child (staff:child) ratios for each age group of children receiving care. Standards for staff:child ratios and group sizes are a way to ensure the safety, well-being, and development of children; provide better supervision and care; and provide children with more opportunities to develop social skills by allowing them to interact with a smaller group of children and staff.**

**Ratios Comparison by age and state**

Age	Michigan	Illinois	Indiana	Iowa	Missouri	Minnesota	North Dakota	Ohio	Oklahoma	Wyoming
18 months to 24 months	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4
24 months to 36 months	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4
36 months to 48 months	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4
48 months to 60 months	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4
60 months to 72 months	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4
72 months to 84 months	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4
84 months to 96 months	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4
96 months to 108 months	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4
108 months to 120 months	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4

weca Wisconsin Child Care Association | 608.723.1069

## Infant-Toddler Child Care

An Essential Support for Babies and Families

**thinkbabies**

America's future depends on quality child care. It not only fuels our country's economic engine by allowing parents to work, but also builds the workforce of the future. Of the 12 billion children and toddlers in the United States, more than half spend some or all of their day being cared for by someone other than their parents. Yet, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed a fragile, underfunded child care system that falls short of what babies and families need to thrive and our economy needs to soar strong. As we build back, policymakers must recognize child care as an essential public good and ensure all families who need it have quality, affordable, and accessible care that supports their babies' healthy development.

Quality child care feeds a baby's growing brain, building the foundation for them to thrive as adults. But available research shows that 75% of toddlers in center care and 85% in home-based care are in low or mediocre quality care settings that can harm their development.\* Once children are under- or over-encouraged children benefit most from quality child care,\*\* but low quality care is often the only care available to them. In particular, children of color lack equitable access to quality formal early care and learning.

**Quality child care allows families to work without discouraging earnings, but it is in short supply.** While most young children are in families with fairly modest incomes, 30 states and Washington, D.C., center-based child care for infants and toddlers is more expensive than state tuition and fees at a public university.† Only 4.2% of low- and moderate-income infants and toddlers are served by the child care assistance available through the Child Care and Development Fund.† Additionally, many families do not benefit from the current child care tax credit because they have little or no income tax liability and the maximum tax benefit does not approach the actual cost of infant-toddler care.

Available child care expense benefits have the quality care they need at that moment, during the hours they need to work. But COVID-19 exacerbated the stress on the child care system. Many providers have been forced to close, unable to make the economics of providing child care work, further narrowing access to the care that families need. Some have opted into under-employment due to the need for greater closure for health reasons, or fewer children returning because of continued high unemployment or parents' concerns about putting their children back in group settings.

**As we build toward the future,** Congress and the Administration must commit to creating a robust child care system that supports the development of all children. Doing so will not only support our economic recovery, but will ensure our future workforce—today's babies and toddlers—arrive at school ready to learn and prepared for future success.

**Policy Recommendations:**

- As the child care system rebuilds following the COVID-19 crisis, we need robust public funding for a system of high-quality programs and providers that are accessible to all families. Any public solution must be built on principles that will ensure it serves the needs of the current and future workforce:
  - Quality: All children receive high-quality child care.
  - Affordability: Families get the financial support they need to afford high-quality child care.
  - Access: Families can access the high-quality child care setting that best meets their needs.
  - Workforce: Early childhood professionals in all settings can receive the support, resources, and compensation they need to provide high-quality care and support their own families.

**QUICK FACTS**

1. In 2018, 10 million under-age 3-year-olds were in non-parental care.†
2. High-quality child care programs improve cognitive, language, and social and emotional development, in part by allowing children to play with other children.
3. In 30 states and Washington, D.C., center-based child care for infants and toddlers is more expensive than a public university.†
4. Only 4.2% of families with low- and moderate-income have access to child care assistance through the Child Care and Development Fund.†
5. Only 10% of programs nationwide are rated high quality.†
6. Currently, children of color are disproportionately served by high-quality child care options.†
7. In 16 states, research has found funding for child care, including % of states without child care at the age of 28.†

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### Family Child Care Safe Environments Ratios and Supervision in Family Child Care

One of the most critical ways you will ensure safety in the daily care of children is by maintaining appropriate ratios and practicing strong supervision. Although these are an important aspect of safety, keeping ratios and using good supervision practices also help foster the development of each child. Maintaining required ratios and supervision practices means you have enough time to offer the engaged attention that helps them bond with you and the other children and learn about the world around them.

#### Objectives

- List safe ratios for family child care settings and reasons why maintaining ratio is important.
- Define active supervision and provide examples of what active supervision looks like.
- Brainstorm ways to safely handle supervision challenges in family child care settings.

Learn

Know

#### Ratios for Family Child Care

To determine the number of children to safely enroll in your family child care program, it is important to consider some factors that could affect your ability to provide care. If you will be working alone, this presents unique challenges in dividing your attention while caring for children and completing tasks like cleaning and preparing meals. If you will also be providing care for your own children, you may have to manage their expectations, especially regarding what they believe to be "their space" in the house. Finally, if you will be working with children with disabilities, you will have to consider how to safely provide adequate care.

It is also critical that you check with the licensing standards in your state and with your family child care administrator to know exactly how many children and of what ages you can safely care for at one time.

### THE NICHD STUDY OF EARLY CHILD CARE AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT



#### Findings for Children up to Age 4½ Years

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
National Institute of Health  
National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

PLEASE NOTE: This information was current at the time the document was published in 2002. The information is not being updated and may no longer be accurate. It is provided for historical purposes only.

