

# WHY USING A LICENSED OR REGISTERED CHILD CARE PROVIDER MATTERS



Licensed and registered child care providers are essential to ensuring a family's children are cared for in a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment. Licensure is an important aspect of giving children the best start possible by providing minimum child care standards to be implemented\*. Below you will find a list of reasons why using licensed and registered child care businesses is important.

## LEGAL OPERATION

Per Montana law, providers can care for up to two unrelated children or all of the children from one family without being registered or licensed. If a provider plans to care for three or more children, they must be registered or licensed. Facilities operating unlicensed or unregistered may be subject to a penalty.



## HEALTH AND SAFETY

Child care businesses are regulated by the Montana Department of Health and Human Services. Licensure rules and regulations ensure all child care businesses are providing a safe and healthy environment for the children in their care. On-site inspections are conducted annually.

## BACKGROUND CHECK

All staff and adults present at child care facilities must have satisfactory FBI fingerprint-based background check results to work or be present at a child care facility.

## CPR AND FIRST AID

All staff must have a current certification for infant, child, and adult CPR, infant choking response, and pediatric first aid. CPR certification must be completed in a hands-on setting.

## ADULT TO CHILD RATIO

Child Care Licensing has identified a maximum amount of children that can be cared for in relation to the adults present, as well as the size of the child care facility. These ratios ensure health and safety standards are being followed.



## CHILD AND ADULT CARE FOOD PROGRAM

Licensed and registered child care providers can participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) which ensures nutritional meals are being served. The CACFP offers training, resources, and support and conducts on-site inspections.

## BEST BEGINNINGS CHILD CARE SCHOLARSHIP

Families eligible for the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship\*, which helps pay the cost of child care, are only able to use licensed or registered child care providers.

## TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

At a minimum, all caregivers must complete 16 hours of annual training per year. Individuals working in a licensed or registered child care facility may also be eligible to receive monetary incentives to complete higher education.

## RESOURCES AND SUPPORT

There are many different entities such as child care resource and referral agencies, Raise Montana, and Zero to Five Montana that offer a variety of supports, resources, training, and consultation services.

## QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Licensed and registered providers are eligible to participate in the STARS to Quality Program. This program provides support, coaching, resources, and monetary incentives to help increase the quality of care being provided.

## GRANTS, LOANS, AND INCENTIVES

Licensed and registered providers may be eligible to utilize loan programs and access certain grant funding. They may also qualify for other scholarships and monetary incentives specific to only licensed and registered providers.

## ACCREDITATION

Licensed and registered providers are eligible to receive accreditation which is granted by independent organizations to facilities that exceed and maintain higher than expected standards that contribute positively to a child's overall development.

*This material has been prepared for informational purposes only, and is not intended to provide tax, legal or accounting advice. For the most accurate information, individuals and businesses consult their own tax, legal, and accounting advisors.*

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## RESOURCES

**Early Childhood Services Bureau**  
[dphhs.mt.gov/ecfsd/childcare/](https://dphhs.mt.gov/ecfsd/childcare/)

**Child Care Licensing**  
[dphhs.mt.gov/ecfsd/childcare/childcare/licensing/index](https://dphhs.mt.gov/ecfsd/childcare/childcare/licensing/index)

**Raise Montana**  
[www.raisemt.org](http://www.raisemt.org)

**Zero to Five Montana**  
<https://www.zerotofive.org>

**Child Care Resource & Referral**  
<https://dphhs.mt.gov/ecfsd/childcare/childcareresourceandreferral>

**Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship Program**  
<https://dphhs.mt.gov/ecfsd/childcare/BestBeginningsScholarships>

*\*Exception: Preschool Programs are not required to be licensed or registered with the State of Montana, but may still offer high-quality care.*

*\*\*The Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship is a state funded subsidy program administered through the Early Childhood Services Bureau in the Department of Public Health and Human Services.*