



## Child Care Centers

### General Requirements to Help Prepare for State Fire Marshal Inspection

The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) conducts fire inspections in all child care centers that are applying for new licenses and those that are already licensed by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). DCYF is the state licensing authority for child care centers, per the [Washington Administrative Code 110-300](#). DCYF requires approval from the OSFM before licensing a facility and may suspend a current license if the OSFM identifies hazards. Child care centers are inspected to the International Fire Code, all applicable state amendments, and to the [Washington Administrative Code 212-12](#). The OSFM does not conduct inspections on home child care facilities.

This document provides the general requirements for compliance, but it does not include every requirement. Local building and fire codes still apply, which means the local permit and plan review processes shall be followed and approval from the local authorities obtained.

Where there is a conflict between a general requirement and a specific requirement, the specific requirement or most restrictive provision applies.

#### Occupancy Classification for Child Care Centers

Child care centers are generally classified as Group E occupancies, but the age of children being cared for may require the center to be classified as a Group I-4. Building construction requirements and fire protection features are more restrictive for Group I occupancies. The local building and/or fire official will determine the occupancy classification as defined below:

**Group E occupancy** – Any portion of a building/room or structure used for child care services for more than five children **older** than 2 ½ years of age.

**Group I-4 occupancy** – Any portion of a building/room or structure used for child care services for more than five children **younger** than 2 ½ years of age. Rooms located on the level of exit discharge and where each room has an exit door directly to the exterior of the building may be classified as a Group E for more than five but not more than 100 children.

#### Certificate of Occupancy

- Obtain a Certificate of Occupancy from the local building department. IBC 111.1

The following items must be listed on the Certificate of Occupancy:

- Occupancy Classification (E or I-4 as indicated above). (IBC 111.2)
- Address of the location being licensed. (IBC 111.2)
- If the building has multiple uses, the space being licensed shall be clearly identified. (IBC 111.2)
- The design occupant load. (IBC 111.2)
- The edition of the code under which the permit was issued. (IBC 112.2)

#### Building Features

- Address must be visible from the street. (IFC 505.1)
- The perimeter of the building is free of fire hazards and combustible waste accumulation. (IFC 304.1)



---

## Child Care Centers

### General Requirements to Help Prepare for State Fire Marshal Inspection

#### Exit Signs

- Exit signs are installed. IFC 1013.1
- Exit signs are clearly visible from any direction of approach. IFC 1013.1
- Exit signs are illuminated. IFC 1013.3, 1013.5, 1013.6.2 & 3
- Exit signs have contrasting color/design to the background where they are installed. IFC 1013.6.1
- Exit signs shall be installed and maintained. IFC 1032.4

#### Egress Illumination

- Monthly documented 30 second test of back up battery in emergency light(s). IFC 1031.10.1
- Annual documented 90 minute test of back up battery in emergency light(s). IFC 1031.10.2

#### Means of Egress

- Combustible materials shall not be stored in exits. IFC 315.3.2
- Group E classrooms can have an occupant load of up to 49 with only one exit door from classroom, more than 49 occupants require access to two or more exit IFC 1006.2.1
- Group I-4 classrooms can have an occupant load of up to 10 with only one exit door from classroom, more than 10 occupants require access to two or more exits. IFC 1006.2.1
- Classrooms with children under 2 ½ years of age or less in a Group E childcare shall be located on the level of exit discharge and shall have an exit door directly to the exterior. IFC chapter 2
- Means of egress doors shall be readily distinguishable. IFC 1010.1
- All egress doors must have a width of 32 inches or greater. IFC 1010.1.1
- Egress doors shall be of the pivoted or side-hinged swinging type. IFC 1010.1.2
- Doors of a facility where the occupant load is 50 or more must swing in the direction of egress travel. IFC 1010.1.2.1
- Doors readily open from egress side without use of a special key, special knowledge, or effort. IFC 1010.2
- Door hardware to include handles, pulls, latches, locks, and other operating devices do not require tight grasping, tight pinching, or twisting of the wrist to operate. IFC 1010.2.2
- Door hardware height shall be between 34 inches to 48 inches above finished floor. IFC 1010.2.3
- The unlatching of any door or leaf does not require more than one operation (single action hardware). IFC 1010.2.1
- Manually operated flush bolts or surface bolts are not permitted. IFC 1010.2.5
- In those classified as Group E, Panic hardware is installed on exit doors where the occupant load is 50 or more. IFC 1010.2.9



## Child Care Centers

### General Requirements to Help Prepare for State Fire Marshal Inspection

- Any gates used as a component in a means of egress shall follow the applicable requirements for doors. IFC 1010.4
- Exit doorways are clear of obstructions. IFC 1022.1

#### Exit Travel

- Egress from a room or space does not pass through adjoining/intervening rooms or areas. IFC 1016.2
- Egress routes do not pass through any room that can be locked to prevent egress. IFC 1016.2
- Egress shall not pass through kitchens, storage rooms, closets, or spaces used for similar purposes. IFC 1016.2
- The required width of corridors shall be unobstructed. IFC 1020.3
- Corridors used as egress routes must have the following minimum unobstructed widths: IFC 1020.3
  - 36 inches in buildings with an occupant load of 50 or fewer
  - 44 inches in buildings with an occupant load greater than 50
  - 72 inches in Group E buildings with an occupant load of 100 or more
- Exit paths lead to a public way (e.g., sidewalk, parking lot). IFC 1028.5

#### Sprinkler System

- Fire areas with an occupant load of **50 or less** do not require fire sprinklers. [WAC 51-54A-0903](#) 903.2.3 & 903.2.6.1
- Fire areas with occupant load 51 – 100 require sprinkler systems unless all the following apply: [WAC 51-54A-0903](#) 903.2.3 & 903.2.6.1
  - Each room where care is provided has a direct exit to the exterior
  - Each room where care is provided is located on the level of exit discharge.
- Fire areas with an occupant load of 101 or more require fire sprinklers. [WAC 51-54A-0903](#) 903.2.3 & 903.2.6.1
- Requirements for fire sprinklers are based on the occupant load of the entire “fire area” for which the childcare is located. 2-hour fire separation is required to create separate fire areas. IBC 707.3.10
- If installed, the fire sprinkler system shall be monitored through the fire alarm system. IFC 903.4.1
- Fire sprinkler system shall be maintained in an operative condition at all times. Systems shall be inspected, tested and maintained in accordance with NFPA 25. IFC 901.6
- Records of all systems inspections, test and maintenance shall be maintained. IFC 901.6.3

#### Fire Alarm System

- Childcare occupancy with occupant load of **50 or less** do not require fire alarm system. [WAC 51-54A-0907](#) 907.2.3 & 907.2.6.4



## Child Care Centers

### General Requirements to Help Prepare for State Fire Marshal Inspection

- Childcare occupancy with an occupant load of **51 - 100** require a manual fire alarm system. [WAC 51-54A-0907](#) 907.2.3 & 907.2.6.4
- Childcare occupancy with an occupant load of **101 or more** require an emergency voice/alarm communication system. [WAC 51-54A-0907](#) 907.2.3 & 907.2.6.4
- If a fire alarm system is required, it shall be monitored. IFC 907.6.6
- Annual inspection, testing and maintenance shall be conducted as required. IFC 901.6, 907.8
- Annual confidence test report readily available for review by inspectors. IFC 901.6.2, IFC 907.8.1
- Carbon monoxide detection is required in each classroom, if building has any gas appliances, fireplaces, or attached parking garages IFC 915.1.1

#### Portable Fire Extinguisher

- Minimum size is (2)A:10B:C. IFC 906.3
- Travel distance from any point in facility to an extinguisher is not more than 75 feet. IFC 906.3(1) TABLE
- Travel distance to fire extinguishers for cooking areas is not to exceed 30 feet. IFC 906.1
- One fire extinguisher is installed for every 3,000 square feet. IFC 906.3(1) TABLE
- Extinguishers are located in a conspicuous location. IFC 906.5
- Extinguishers shall not be obstructed or obscured. IFC 906.6
- Extinguishers shall be installed in a cabinet or by a hanging bracket. IFC 906.7 & 8
- The tops of extinguishers shall not exceed 5 feet above the floor. IFC 906.9.1
- Monthly checks shall be completed/documentated by facility staff to ensure extinguishers are ready for use (needles should be in green on gauges, safety pins are in place, seals are not broken, and hoses are clear of debris). IFC 906.2 (NFPA 10)
- Annual inspection and testing required. IFC 901.6 and 906.2

#### Cooking

- Type I hood required above all commercial and domestic cooking appliances used for commercial cooking purposes that produce grease laden vapors. [WAC 51-54A-0606](#)
- Residential hood is allowed when covering single domestic cooking appliance and when cooking is limited to **boiling, steaming, and warming precooked food**. [WAC 51-54A-0606](#)
- Hood, grease-removal devices, fans, ducts and other appurtenances required to be inspected and cleaned at 6-month intervals. IFC 606.3.3
- If installed, kitchen hood suppression system shall be inspected and maintained in accordance with NFPA 17A at minimum 6-month intervals. IFC 904.5



## Child Care Centers

### General Requirements to Help Prepare for State Fire Marshal Inspection

#### Fire Safety

- Twelve planned and unannounced fire drills shall be held every year (monthly). [WAC 212-12-044](#)
- Detailed written record of all fire drills shall be maintained and available for inspection. IFC 405.6 [WAC 212-12-044](#)
- If the facility has an automatic fire alarm system, the system shall be activated as part of the drill. IFC 405.8
- Fire escape routes shall be posted at exit discharge. IFC 404.4.
- Fire safety plan in place. IFC 404.2.2
- Fire evacuation plan in place. IFC 404.2.1
- Fire safety and evacuation plans are reviewed or updated annually and documented. IFC 404.3

#### Occupant Load

- The licensed capacity is separate from the occupant load and is determined by the Department of Children, Youth and Families. [WAC 110-300-0354](#)
- The occupant load is determined by dividing the net floor area (sf) by 35. IFC Table 1004.5
  - Net Floor Area is defined as – the actual occupied area (only the room areas that are used for specific occupancy purposes) not including unoccupied accessory areas such as corridors, stairways, toilet rooms, mechanical rooms, or closets. IFC TABLE 1004.5

#### General Housekeeping

- Non-sprinklered building maximum storage height is **24 inches** below the ceiling. IFC 315.3.1
- Sprinklered building maximum storage height is **18 inches** below sprinkler heads. IFC 315.3.1
- No storage of combustible material in electrical, mechanical or boiler rooms. IFC 315.3.3
- Approved multi plug adapters are used. Shall be listed in accordance with UL 1363 IFC 603.5
- Extension cords are not to be used in place of permanent wiring. IFC 603.6
- Penetrations to smoke/fire barriers shall be sealed with a rated material. IFC 703.1
- Curtains, draperies, fabric hangings, and other similar decorative materials suspended from walls or ceilings shall not exceed **10 percent** of the wall or ceiling area to which they are attached. IFC 807.2
- Artwork and teaching materials in corridors shall not exceed **20 percent** coverage of the corridor sidewall. IFC 807.5.2.2
- Artwork and teaching materials in classrooms shall not exceed **50 percent** coverage of the classroom wall area to which they are attached. IFC 807.5.2.3