

# Chapter 1: Staffing

## 1.1 Child:Staff Ratio, Group Size, and Minimum Age

### 1.1.1 Child:Staff Ratio and Group Size



#### 1.1.1.1: Ratios for Small Family Child Care Homes

The small family child care home caregiver/teacher child:staff ratios should conform to the following table:

If the small family child care home caregiver/teacher has no children under two years of age in care,	then the small family child care home caregiver/teacher may have one to six children over two years of age in care
If the small family child care home caregiver/teacher has one child under two years of age in care,	then the small family child care home caregiver/teacher may have one to three children over two years of age in care
If the small family child care home caregiver/teacher has two children under two years of age in care,	then the small family child care home caregiver/teacher may have no children over two years of age in care

The small family child care home caregiver's/teacher's own children as well as any other children in the home temporarily requiring supervision should be included in the child:staff ratio. During nap time, at least one adult should be physically present in the same room as the children.

#### **RATIONALE**

Low child:staff ratios are most critical for infants and toddlers (birth to thirty-six months) (1). Infant and child development and caregiving quality improves when group size and child:staff ratios are smaller (2). Improved verbal interactions are correlated with lower child:staff ratios (3). Small ratios are very important for young children's development (7). The recommended group size and child:staff ratio allow three- to five-year-old children to have continuing adult support and guidance while encouraging independent, self-initiated play and other activities (4).

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) requires in the NFPA 101: Life Safety Code that small family child care homes serve no more than two clients incapable of self-preservation (5).

Direct, warm social interaction between adults and children is more common and more likely with lower child:staff ratios. Caregivers/teachers must be recognized as performing a job for groups of children that parents/guardians of twins, triplets, or quadruplets would rarely be left to handle alone. In child care, these children do not come from the same family and must learn a set of common rules that may differ from expectations in their own homes (6,8).

#### **COMMENTS**

It is best practice for the caregiver/teacher to remain in the same room as the infants when they are sleeping to provide constant supervision. However in small family child care programs, this may be difficult in practice because the caregiver/teacher is typically alone, and all of the children most likely will not sleep at the same time. In order to provide constant supervision during sleep, caregivers/teachers could consider discontinuing the practice of placing infant(s) in a separate room for sleep, but instead placing the infant's crib in the area used by the other children so the caregiver/teacher is able to supervise the sleeping infant(s) while caring for the other children. Care must be taken so that placement of cribs in an area used by other children does not encroach upon the minimum usable floor space requirements. Infants do not require a dark and quiet place for sleep. Once they become accustomed, infants are able to sleep without problems in environments with light and noise. By placing infants (as well as all children in care) on the main (ground) level of the home for sleep and remaining on the same level as the children, the caregiver/teacher is more likely able to evacuate the children in less time; thus, increasing the odds of a successful evacuation in the event of a fire or another emergency. Caregivers/teachers must also continually monitor other children in this area so they are not climbing on or into the cribs. If the caregiver/teacher cannot remain in the same room as the infant(s) when the infant is sleeping, it is recommended that the caregiver/teacher should do visual checks every ten to fifteen minutes to make sure the infant's head is uncovered, and assess the infant's breathing, color, etc. Supervision is recommended for toddlers and preschoolers to ensure safety and prevent behaviors such as inappropriate touching or hurting other sleeping children from taking place. These behaviors may go undetected if a caregiver/teacher is not present. If caregiver/teacher is not able to remain in the same room as the children, frequent visual checks are also recommended for toddlers and preschoolers when they are sleeping.

Each state has its own set of regulations that specify child:staff ratios. To view a particular state's regulations, go to the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education's (NRC) Website: <http://nrckids.org>. Some states are setting limits on the number of school-age children that are allowed to be cared for in small family child care homes, e.g., two school-age children in addition to the maximum number allowed for infants/preschool children. No data are available to support using a different ratio where school-age children are in family child care homes. Since school-age children require focused caregiver/teacher time and attention for supervision and adult-child interaction, this standard applies the same ratio to all children three-years-old and over. The family child care caregiver/teacher must be able to have a positive relationship and provide guidance for each child in care. This standard is consistent with ratio requirements for toddlers in centers as described in Standard 1.1.1.2.

Unscheduled inspections encourage compliance with this standard.

#### **TYPE OF FACILITY**

Small Family Child Care Home

#### **RELATED STANDARDS**

**1.1.1.3** Ratios for Facilities Serving Children with Special Health Care Needs and Disabilities

**1.1.2.1** Minimum Age to Enter Child Care

#### **REFERENCES**

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