



Choosing Quality Child Care

The first five years of a child's life are critical learning years.

Early childhood professionals who have early learning training and education accelerate how our children learn, develop and build skills needed to succeed in life.

Consider these tips as you search for a safe, high-quality learning environment where your child can grow and thrive.

Learning

- Is the play space organized with age-appropriate toys and are books, puzzles and blocks easy to reach and use?
- Does the child care program offer both structured and unstructured play time daily?
- Do providers frequently read and sing to children throughout the day?
- Does the child care program allow screen time? National guidelines recommend children under 2 years have no screen time, and children 2 years+ total screen time is less than thirty minutes each week, for educational or physical activity use only.

Supervision

- Are children watched at all times, including when they are sleeping?
- Are teachers warm, welcoming and interacting with each child?
- Are clear and simple safety rules established with the children?
- Do teachers focus on positive, clear, consistent and fair guidance?
- Are there enough staff-members to supervise all children? See the recommended guidelines for adult-to-child ratios on the reverse side.



Is the program participating in IdahoSTARS? IdahoSTARS offers child care providers opportunities for professional development, scholarships and certifications.

Training and Professional Development

- Do the teachers and director have a credential or an early childhood-related degree?
- Has the provider had specific training on children's development and experience caring for children?
- Are teachers continuing to receive early childhood-related training or education?

Health and Safety

- Do teachers follow standards for health and safety, including proper hand washing?
- Is someone always present who has current pediatric CPR and pediatric first aid training?
- Is there a plan for responding to disasters (fire, flood, etc.)?
- Do the children go outside every day unless the weather doesn't support outdoor time?
- Is the playground regularly inspected for safety?
- Does the child care program support breastfeeding?
- Are infants held by adults during feeding?
- Does the child care program serve meals?

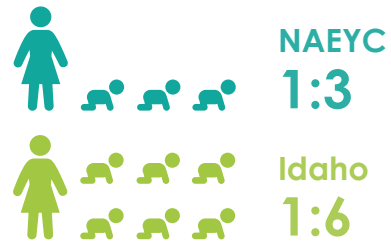
Communication

- Is the program accredited by a national organization? Accreditation indicates the program has been recognized by a leading national organization for providing excellent care.
- Does the child care program participate in Steps to Quality offered through IdahoSTARS?
- Are parents always welcome in the home or center and given a copy of the program's policies?
- Are annual conferences held with parents?

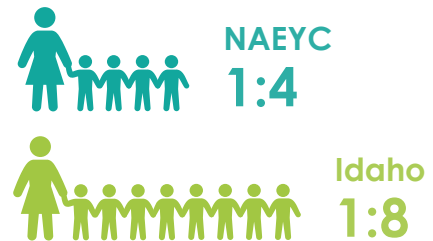
Adult-to-Child Ratios

The following chart is a comparison of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) recommendations for best care to Idaho's licensing requirements:

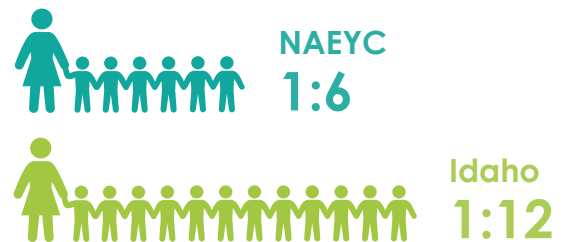
Under 24 months



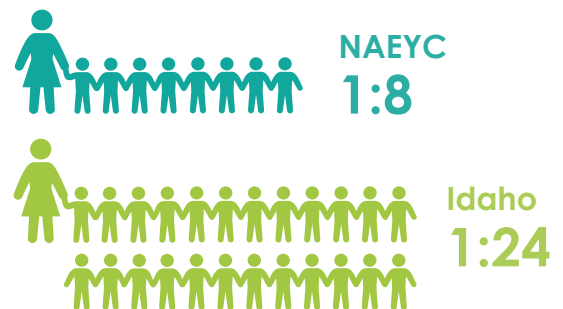
24-36 months



36 months to 5 years



5 years to Kindergarten



Eight Idaho cities have stronger licensing standards than the state. Contact your city to find out child care requirements for your area.