

MOUNTAINHEART  
COMMUNITY SERVICES SOUTH

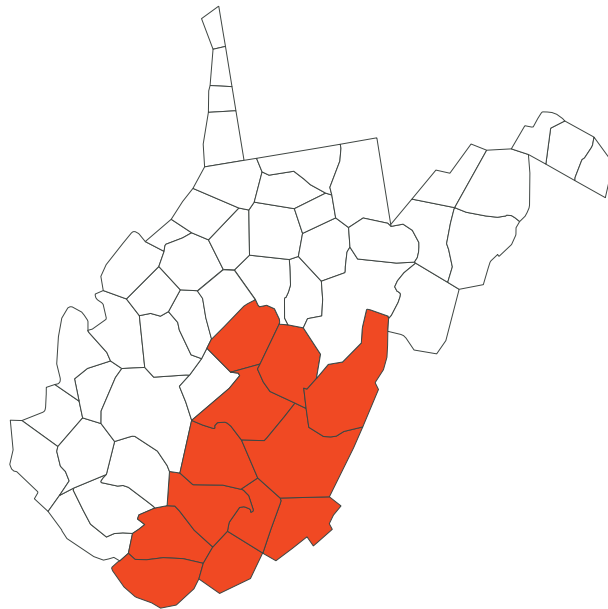
STARTUP GUIDE FOR

# CHILD CARE CENTERS



**WEST VIRGINIA COUNTIES IN THE MOUNTAINHEART COMMUNITY SERVICES SOUTH CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL REGION:**

- BRAXTON
- FAYETTE
- GREENBRIER
- MCDOWELL
- MERCER
- MONROE
- NICHOLAS
- POCAHONTAS
- RALEIGH
- SUMMERS
- WEBSTER
- WYOMING



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# BEFORE YOU BEGIN

We have developed a comprehensive guide to opening a child care center in West Virginia with a brief overview of the process as a whole.

## THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW BEFORE YOU GET STARTED

### BEFORE YOU COMMIT TO OPEN A CENTER:

If you would like to open a child care center, the first thing you need to do is contact a licensing specialist with the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR). A licensing specialist is the go-to person to help you obtain a license for your center. They will support you and answer any questions you might have along the way.

Click [HERE](#) to contact a licensing specialist.

To obtain a license, there are two things you must do: first, you need to complete a Needs Assessment and Letter of Intent; second, you need to fill out an Initial Application. These documents involve multi-step processes and will be submitted at a later stage. You can find more details below.

## WHEN YOU ARE SOMEWHAT COMMITTED TO OPENING A CENTER:

### NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND LETTER OF INTENT PHASE:

Before renting or buying a space for your center, you need to be in touch with the [Office of the State Fire Marshal \(OSFM\)](#) and the [local Health Department \(HD\)](#). They will ensure that your potential space is in line with current regulations, which can stop you from wasting money on a space that is not suited for a center and help you save money on potential renovations.

It is at this point you will work with a licensing specialist to turn in a Needs Assessment and Letter of Intent to the DHHR.

Now it is time to consider how you will develop your business and marketing plan. A business and marketing plan is key to the success of your center.

These plans are important because they will help you maintain your center for years to come and grow it when you are ready. Centers often operate on very thin margins, and a business and marketing plan will help you make ends meet. In addition, these plans can help you:

- Expand your program over time
- Increase the number of families you can serve
- Increase staff pay
- Stay in business even if something out of your control happens

The WV SBDC business coach will help you work on a plan. Below is the contact information for the coach.

[WV SBDC](#)  
[888-WVA-SBDC](tel:888-WVA-SBDC)   [AskMe@wv.gov](mailto:AskMe@wv.gov)

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## WHEN YOU ARE COMMITTED TO OPENING A CENTER:

### INITIAL APPLICATION PHASE:

Now that you are sure you want to open a center, it is time to submit your Initial Application to the DHHR. At this stage, you will continue to work with a licensing specialist and WV SBDC business coach. If the DHHR approves your application, you will receive a license to operate.

Once you are ready to open, there are a few things you should keep in mind.

We have asked many top-notch providers what the keys are to running a successful center. Here is what they had to say:

- Create a solid budget for your center and stick to it (the business coach can help you).
- Focus on the quality of your program and let quality guide your decisions.
- Surround yourself with the best staff who will help you achieve your program goals. Without quality staff you cannot have a quality program. Moreover, quality is more important than quantity.
- Make sure you and your staff always do what is best for the child.
- Have either staff or tools to manage your center's budget. That could be an accountant or a tool like QuickBooks.
- Always keep an open line of communication with your staff. That way you will know if your staff is happy, which will help prevent turnover.
- Get parents and the community involved, which can help you get in-kind support and donations.

## USING THIS GUIDE

This guide explains how to obtain a license to open a center. It includes helpful tips, resources, and ways to supplement your prospective center's budget as well.

We have created a checklist that you can find at the end of this document to help ensure you will not miss any important steps.

Remember, you can always lean on the licensing specialist and business coach to guide you. They will make sure you have access to everything you need to succeed in your business.

## INTRODUCTION

The early care and education (ECE) industry is essential to growing West Virginia's economy. Access to ECE is an essential service and a key piece of our infrastructure. Its services allow families to work or go to school. Providers not only care for children and keep them safe but also support their development and school readiness. ECE providers educate and prepare the next generation of workers, which directly impacts the size and quality of the future workforce.



## KEY WORDS AND ACRONYMS:

**EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION (ECE)**

**INITIAL APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF LICENSE OR APPROVAL TO OPERATE A CHILD CARE CENTER (INITIAL APPLICATION)**

**MOUNTAINHEART COMMUNITY SERVICES SOUTH CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL (MOUNTAINHEART SOUTH CCR&R)**

**NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND LETTER OF INTENT (LETTER OF INTENT)**

**OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES (OEHS)**

**OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL (OSFM)**

**SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (SBA)**

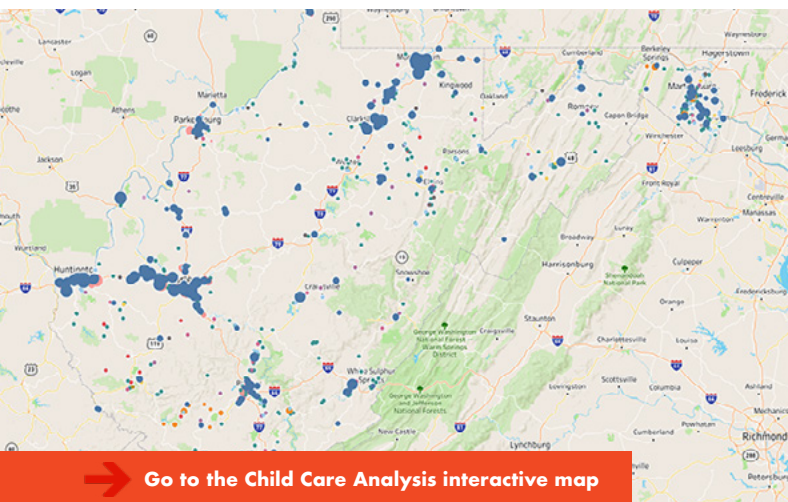
**WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE (WVDA)**

**WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN RESOURCES (DHHR)**

**WEST VIRGINIA SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER (WV SBDC)**

**WEST VIRGINIA STATE TRAINING AND REGISTRY SYSTEM (WV STARS)**

# CHILD CARE INTERACTIVE MAP



West Virginia has many child care deserts, which are areas where there are more than three children under age five for every licensed ECE slot.

The [Child Care Analysis](#) map offers a clear picture of ECE deserts, which can be great locations for new centers. There is an urgent need for new ECE providers, which help support local businesses and ensure that employers have access to a reliable and productive labor force.

Families, in turn, can find the services they need in order to work and provide for their loved ones.

As of April 2021, West Virginia has a total of 1,326 licensed ECE providers, including the following in the MountainHeart South CCR&R region: Braxton (5), Fayette (41), Greenbrier (37), Mercer (112), McDowell (10), Monroe (7), Nicholas (13), Pocahontas (5), Raleigh (79), Summers (7), Webster (6), and Wyoming (19).

The map includes all licensed ECE providers in West Virginia. It also includes detailed data on the number, type, and capacity of providers by region. You will also find salaries for ECE workers by county and much more.

You can use the Provider County, Provider City, and Provider Zip Code filters to select areas in the MountainHeart South CCR&R region.

In addition, the map also provides relevant workforce data, like information regarding the number of single parents and married couples who are in the labor force.

The Ross Foundation will upload the map annually.

# STEP-BY-STEP: HOW TO APPLY FOR A LICENSE TO OPEN A CHILD CARE CENTER

## OVERVIEW

The [West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources \(DHHR\)](#) oversees the issuance of a license to operate an ECE business.

The DHHR works with the [West Virginia Department of Agriculture \(WVDA\)](#), the [Office of Environmental Health Services \(OEHS\)](#) or local health departments, and the [Office of the State Fire Marshal \(OSFM\)](#) on different parts of the licensing process. A license is valid for up to two years from the date of issuance.

## DEFINITION

A **child care center** is a facility used to provide ECE services to 13 or more children. The facility needs to be open for more than 30 days per year per child.

## HOW TO OBTAIN A LICENSE TO OPERATE

If you would like to open a child care center, it is a good idea to start by reading the [Child Care Center Information Packet](#). It has general information, basic requirements, and answers to frequently asked questions.

Throughout the licensing process, make sure you read the [Child Care Centers Licensing](#), which explains regulations for child care centers.

# PART 1.) NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND LETTER OF INTENT

The first step in applying for a license is to contact a [licensing specialist](#), the [OSFM](#) and the [local Health Department \(HD\)](#). They will provide you with initial information. You can find a list of HD in the MountainHeart South CCR&R region in Table 1. Be sure to contact the OSFM and the HD before signing a lease for your center because they will make sure that your desired space is in line with regulations. Please keep the licensing specialist in the loop during these conversations.

You will need to fill out a [Needs Assessment and Letter of Intent](#) (Letter of Intent). The Letter of Intent, which

has 12 sections, is how the DHHR determines if there is a need for a new ECE business in a given location. Through the Letter of Intent, the DHHR also evaluates if a potential provider meets basic requirements.

You do not need to have a finalized answer to every question at this time; however, the more information you have, the easier it will be for you to complete your Initial Application later.

**SECTION 1** asks your full name and address as well as the name and address of your prospective center.

**SECTIONS 2 AND 3:** The [Child Care Analysis](#) map and [WV STARS](#) should help you fill out these sections. The Analysis map has data on providers by location, capacity and ages of children served. You will also find employment data and wages for ECE workers. WV STARS has information on online and in-person ECE training. Once you are open, WV STARS can help you keep your training up-to-date.

- The WV SBDC business coach can help you use the Analysis map and WV STARS. You can find contact information for the coaches under [Technical Support and Resources](#).
- **Section 2** has questions about providers in the area where you would like to open your center. It asks for the number, type, and hours of operation of existing providers, and if they have waiting lists. You will be asked to include the ages of the children they serve and average wages for ECE workers.
- **Section 3** asks questions about ECE training you have completed or plan to complete. You will answer these questions based on your center Type. Your center can be Type I, II, or III depending on the number of children you plan to serve. For a more complete explanation, see page 5 of the [Child Care Center Information Packet](#).

**SECTION 4:** If the building where you would like to open your center was built before 1978, you must contact a Lead Risk Assessor via the [Lead Program](#). The Lead Program will connect you with a licensed Lead Risk Assessor who can assist you. This assessment is to protect you, your staff, and the children in your program from lead poisoning.

- The Assessor will put together a report that you will need to submit to the DHHR and the HD. The report will have recommendations that your center will need to follow.

COUNTY	HD WEBSITES	HD PHONE #
<b>BRAXTON</b>	<a href="#">Braxton County HD</a>	<a href="#">304-765-2851</a>
<b>FAYETTE</b>	<a href="#">Fayette County HD</a>	<a href="#">304-574-1617</a>
<b>GREENBRIER</b>	<a href="#">Greenbrier County HD</a>	<a href="#">304-645-1539</a>
<b>MCDOWELL</b>	<a href="#">McDowell County HD</a>	<a href="#">304-448-2174</a>
<b>MERCER</b>	<a href="#">Mercer County HD</a>	<a href="#">304-324-8836</a>
<b>MONROE</b>	<a href="#">Monroe County HD</a>	<a href="#">304-772-3064</a>
<b>NICHOLAS</b>	<a href="#">Nicholas County HD</a>	<a href="#">304-872-5329</a>
<b>POCAHONTAS</b>	<a href="#">Pocahontas County HD</a>	<a href="#">304-799-4154</a>
<b>RALEIGH</b>	<a href="#">Raleigh County HD</a>	<a href="#">304-252-8532</a>
<b>SUMMERS</b>	<a href="#">Summers County HD</a>	<a href="#">304-466-3388</a>
<b>WEBSTER</b>	<a href="#">Webster County HD</a>	<a href="#">304-847-5483</a>
<b>WYOMING</b>	<a href="#">Wyoming County HD</a>	<a href="#">304-732-7941</a>

**TABLE 1.** Contact Information for Local Health Departments in the MountainHeart South CCR&R Region<sup>1</sup>

**SECTION 5:** Review the [OSFM Minimum Requirements for ECE businesses](#). Then fill out the [OSFM Initial Inspection Request](#) and mail it to the address in the form. You will need to pay a \$25 fee.

- The OSFM will be in touch with you about next steps and will later issue a Fire Safety Inspection Report. You will need to attach the Report to your Initial Application (see [Part 2](#)).

**SECTION 6:** To complete this section, you will work with the HD that serves the county where you plan to open your center. You can find a list of HD in the MountainHeart South CCR&R region in Table 1.

<sup>1</sup> Many HD websites are not updated regularly, so the best way to get up to date information about permits is by phone.



- First, you should fill out a [SG-99 Child Care Center Plan Review Information Report](#). You will need to attach a floor plan for your center<sup>2</sup> to the SG-99 and submit them to the HD.
  - Your center must serve healthy meals to children in your program. Meals can be catered or cooked on location at your center. If you would like to prepare meals in your center, you will need to submit a [SF-35 Food Establishment Plan Review Application](#).
  - Plan reviews (forms SG-99 and SF-35) are for centers that are new, under renovation or have a new owner. Some HD charge plan review fees. For example, the Braxton County HD charges a plan review fee of \$150 for a SG-99 and up to \$125 for a SF-35.
  - Make sure you attach a floor plan for the center’s kitchen<sup>2</sup> to the SF-35. You should also include an example menu and a list of kitchen equipment. Once you gather these documents, please submit them to the HD.
  - Once the HD approves your plans, the next step is to fill out a [SG-49 Application for a Permit to Operate](#). If meals will be cooked on location at your center, you will also need to fill out a [SF-5 Application for a Permit to Operate a Food Establishment](#). Then you will need to send the SG-49 and SF-5 to the HD together with the [Fees for Permits](#)<sup>3</sup>.
- The HD charges fees to issue permits for child care centers and food services establishments. Fees for permits are based on the number of children in your program.
  - While the State sets the highest amount a county or HD can charge from child care providers, an HD usually does not charge the maximum fees for permits (see Table 2 and Table 3). For example, the Webster County HD charges \$150 for a permit for centers with 26 children or more and \$400 for a permit for centers that serve food for 81 children or more.
  - Permits are valid for one year and expire on December 31 for child care centers and June 30 for food services.
  - Employees who will cook the food for your center will need to take a food safety course. The [StateFoodSafety®: Online Training for Food Workers](#) is accepted by all counties in the MountainHeart South CCR&R region, except for Pocahontas. The Pocahontas County HD accepts the [Tap Series®: Food Handler Training](#) online course. Your food workers will need to complete training within 30 days of hire. Online training for a 2-year Statewide Card costs up to \$40.
  - You or a management level staff must be a certified food protection manager. To follow this regulation, you or a staff must pass a test from an [ANSI-CFP Accredited Program](#). Online training and exam costs start at \$78 (plus the Proctor Fee<sup>4</sup>), and the certification is usually valid for 5 years.
  - In-person food safety and certified food protection manager courses are also available at some HD. Check with the HD where you would like to open your center for upcoming training sessions and any additional steps or fees.

<sup>2</sup> A floor plan for your center needs to include the location of all activity area equipment, including diaper changing areas, fixtures, and toilet rooms. A floor plan for your center’s kitchen needs to include the location of all food service equipment, including dining areas, fixtures, and toilet rooms. Floor plans must be drawn to scale, i.e., the drawings need to show the layout of the physical objects in your center relative to their original size.

<sup>3</sup> The Fees for Permits included in this guide were set by the State in 2020. The State revises the maximum fee for permits from time to time.

<sup>4</sup> Food Protection Manager Certification exams must be monitored by an approved proctor. Proctors are responsible for monitoring exam sessions to ensure that exams are taken fairly. For more details, please contact an [ANSI-CFP Accredited Program](#).

TYPE OF PROVIDER	NUMBER OF CHILDREN	MAXIMUM FEE FOR PERMIT
FAMILY DAY CARE FACILITY	7 to 12	\$60
DAY CARE CENTER	13 to 25	\$125
DAY CARE CENTER	26 and Over	\$185

**TABLE 2.** Fees for Permits for Child Care Centers (Form SG-49)

SEATING CAPACITY (NUMBER OF CHILDREN SERVED)	MAXIMUM FEE FOR PERMIT
0 TO 20	\$125
21 TO 50	\$250
51 TO 80	\$375
81 AND OVER	\$500

**TABLE 3.** Fees for Permits for Food Service Establishment (Form SF-5)

- Your center must serve meals that meet the standards of the [USDA Child and Adult Food Program](#). That includes serving meals or snacks to children every four hours and following the [FDA 2013 Food Code](#).
- Once the HD reviews and approves your SG-49 and SF-35, they will contact you to set up an opening inspection. Before the inspection, you will need to have the go ahead from the OSFM.
- Depending on your center’s location, city officials may do other inspections. You will also need to follow other guidelines and recommendations due to COVID-19. Contact the HD for more information.
- After you complete all these steps, the HD will do an opening inspection at your center. If everything checks out, you will receive a permit to open a child care center and serve food. You will receive the inspection reports from the HD together with your permits. You will need to attach all these documents to your Initial Application (see [Part 2](#)).
- The HD will inspect your center initially and then twice a year.
- Remember that a permit is not a license. A permit shows to the DHHR that your center space has been approved by the HD. It is the DHHR that is in charge of issuing a license to operate.
- The steps listed above are common to all counties in the MountainHeart South CCR&R region. Depending on the city where you would like to open your center, there might be more fees and regulations.

**SECTION 7:** You will need to submit an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) plan packet to the WVDA. The goal of an IPM plan is to protect children and staff from pesticides.

- First, read the [Your Integrated Pest Management Program](#) for an overview of IPM. Then read the [Integrated Pest Management Programs in Schools and Child Care Centers/Facilities](#).
- Next, please call [304-558-2209](tel:304-558-2209) to request an IPM plan packet. Once you review the packet, submit an Integrated Pest Management Plan to the WVDA. The

WVDA will later send you an approval letter. You will submit the letter to the DHHR.

- You will also need to do an initial inspection of your center. Pages 32-34 of the Best Management Practices booklet have a Sanitation and Maintenance Report (the booklet is included in the IPM plan packet). Either you or the pest control company of your choice can use the Report to do an initial inspection.

**SECTION 8:** The WV SBDC business coach will help you fill out this section. You can find their contact information under [Technical Support and Resources](#).

- You will need to submit proof that you have enough money to pay for six months of operating expenses. You will also need to have enough funds to buy equipment, materials and supplies. The business coach will help you estimate running costs for your center.
- Remember that the OSFM and the HD need to approve your center equipment.

AGE OF CHILDREN	MAX. NUMBER OF CHILDREN TO BE CARED FOR BY ONE QUALIFIED STAFF MEMBER	MAX. NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN A GROUP
<b>6 WEEKS TO 1 YEAR (6 WEEKS – 12 MONTHS)</b>	4	8
<b>1 YEAR - 2 YEARS (13 MONTHS - 24 MONTHS)</b>	4	12
<b>2 YEARS (25 MONTHS - 35 MONTHS)</b>	8	16
<b>3 YEARS (36 MONTHS - 47 MONTHS)</b>	10	20
<b>4 YEARS (48 MONTHS - 59 MONTHS)</b>	12	24
<b>SCHOOL-AGE</b>	16	32

**TABLE 4.** Staff-Child Ratio for Child Care Centers



→ To follow regulations, your center needs

**35** SQ. FT.

of activity space per child.

**SECTION 9** asks for general information about your center. That includes spatial needs, curriculum and the age of the children that will be in your program.

- Children must be between six weeks and 12 years of age.
- To follow regulations, your center needs to have 35 square feet of activity space per child. Your center also needs to have one hand-washing sink and one toilet for every 15 children. See [Child Care Centers Licensing](#) for more details.
- For the outdoor area, your center needs to have 75 square feet of activity space per child.
- Before signing a lease, think about the number of children you would like to serve. Be sure to choose a building with enough space. You will use this information together with staff-child ratios (see Table 4) to determine your capacity. This will also help you estimate how much income you will need to pay for expenses.

**SECTION 10** is about background checks. You do not need to request background checks at this point. You can wait until you start filling out an Initial Application.

**SECTION 11** is about zoning laws and business registration.

- The West Virginia Secretary of State's Office (WVSOS) [Business Division](#) handles [business registrations](#). You can register your business online, through the [One Stop Business Portal](#) or by mail.
- The WVSOS processes most business filings immediately or within a few days. Expedited services are also available. If you have questions, please contact the licensing staff at [304-558-8000](tel:304-558-8000). They are also available by [email](#) (type "business & licensing" in the search box).
- The County Commission or municipality where you would like to open your center can answer questions about zoning laws. Once you finish this process, you will receive a business license.

**SECTION 12** is the signature section. Once you fill out the Letter of Intent, you should mail it to the address below.

WV DHHR BCF  
Division of Early Care and Education  
Child Care Regulation Unit  
350 Capitol Street, Room B-18  
Charleston, WV 25301

Remember that the Letter of Intent is not a license application, but it will become part of your Initial Application.

## **PART 2.) INITIAL APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF LICENSE OR APPROVAL TO OPERATE A CHILD CARE CENTER**

Once the DHHR receives your Letter of Intent, a [licensing specialist](#) will review it. If it is complete, the DHHR will send you an Initial Application for a Certificate of License or Approval to Operate a Child Care Center. The Initial Application, which has 8 sections, asks for more details about your center. You will need to provide relevant documentation.

- Make sure you read the [Child Care Centers Licensing](#), which describes the regulations you must follow.
- The Initial Application comes with instructions. Below is a summary of the information requested in each section.

**SECTION 1** asks for the physical and mailing address of your center.

- If you are renting the property, you should add the owner's contact information.
- Next, you will answer questions about your business structures, which includes type of ownership, hours of operation, your center's capacity, and whether or not your center will offer transportation to children.
- The last question is about participation in the [Child and Adult Care Food Program \(CACFP\)](#). The CACFP is a federal program managed by states. CACFP reimburses providers who serve healthy meals and snacks to children.

- Providers receive [reimbursement](#) for two meals and one snack or one meal and two snacks. They are only reimbursed for meals served to children who qualify for the program. Remember that this program is different from the DHHR's [tiered reimbursement system](#).
- The [WVDE Office of Child Nutrition](#) manages the CACFP in West Virginia. Providers that are a public institution or private nonprofit qualify for the program. For-profit centers that receive subsidies for at least 25 percent of the children in their programs also qualify. For more information, contact the CACFP coordinator by [email](#) or at [304-558-7010](tel:304-558-7010).

**SECTION 2:** Fill out this section only if your center is privately owned. Please attach the eligibility letter from WV CARES for the owner(s) as well. See "Background Checks" under Section 7 on page 11 for more details.

**SECTIONS 3 AND 4** ask information about your center's governing body and parent advisory board/committee.

- You will need to create a governing body at the time you are applying for a license. You can find more details in [Child Care Centers Licensing](#).
- Your center's governing body must include a parent of a child currently enrolled. If a parent is not available, then you will need to create a parent advisory board.
- The parent advisory board is made up of parents with children in your program. The [Child Care Centers Licensing](#) has more details.

**SECTION 5** asks for information about your center director and any staff you have hired.

- Be sure to include your projections both for the first month and when the center is at full capacity.
- The [Child Care Center Information Packet](#) has a summary of the education and training your staff needs to have. All qualified staff must register with [WV STARS](#) (click on "Join").
- The [Child Care Resource and Referral \(CCR&R\) agencies](#) have great resources for providers, including new provider orientation and professional development opportunities. CCR&R agencies also offer ongoing support for new and existing providers. See [Technical Support and Resources](#) for more information.

**SECTION 6** is about your center's finances. The WV SBDC business coach can help you fill out this section.



# CCR&R

The Child Care Resource and Referral agencies have great resources for families and providers.

You can find their contact information under [Technical Support and Resources](#).

- You need to show proof that you can fund the operations of your center for six months based on your estimated budget.
- The business coach will estimate your center's revenue and costs based on the number of children you would like to serve.
- Your financial institution should fill out Section B.(3) and C.

**SECTION 7** lists the documents you need to attach to your Initial Application.

- Please include emergency disaster and evacuation plans for your center. Your plans must be specific to the county and region where you would like to open your center. You can use the DHHR [Emergency Plan](#) form for your center's plans or create your own form. The [Child Care Center Licensing](#) can guide you as you create your plans.
- The [West Virginia Emergency Management \(WVEM\)](#) can help you put together an evacuation plan.

Each county has an Emergency Management (EM) department. You can use these [contact numbers](#) to get in touch with your local EM department. You must fill out an evacuation plan annually with the Emergency Services Director.

- The DHHR also has information for providers who are developing plans. You can read more details in the DHHR [Emergency Preparedness Resources](#) (scroll all the way to the bottom).
- If you are renting a space, you will need to attach a lease or rental agreement.
- If you take part in the CACFP, you need to show proof that your center is enrolled. See [Section 1](#) for more details.
- **Background Checks:**
  - » You and your staff must complete a few background checks, including a [state and federal criminal check](#), an [adult and child protective services check](#), and a check of both the [state](#) and [federal](#) sex offender registries.

- » Those who have lived out-of-state during the past five years must also submit an out-of-state background check.
- » Those who work in WV and live in another state must turn in a background check from the state they live in. To request an adult and child protective services check, complete an [Authorization and Release for Protective Services Record Check \(Non-WV Resident\)](#).
- » [WV CARES](#) handles state and federal background checks for ECE businesses. WV CARES also checks the state and federal sex offender registries. You can contact WV CARES by phone at [304-558-2018](tel:304-558-2018) or email at [wvcare@wv.gov](mailto:wvcare@wv.gov).
- » WV CARES will email you an eligibility determination letter based on the results of the background checks.
- » To request an adult and child protective services check, complete an [Authorization and Release for Protective Services Record Check \(WV Resident\)](#).
- » Before you can open your center, you and your staff must have an eligibility determination letter from WV CARES. You will attach the letters to your Initial Application. You can find more details in [Background Checks: A Guide for West Virginia Child Care Providers](#).

**SECTION 8** is the signature section. Once you fill out your Initial Application, you should mail it to the address below. There is currently no processing fee for the Initial Application.

West Virginia Department of Health & Human Resources  
 Division of Early Care & Education  
 350 Capital Street, room B-18  
 Charleston, WV 25301

- The DHHR has 60 days to make a decision on an application. The DHHR can only decide if your license will be granted or denied if you turn in a complete Initial Application.
- For the duration of the pandemic, all child care centers need to [register](#) to become a Temporary Crisis Child Care Site. To do that, you will need to fill out a [Registration for Temporary Crisis Child Care Site](#) and a [Child Care Site Self-Certification Checklist](#). Please send these documents to [ECEProviders@wv.gov](mailto:ECEProviders@wv.gov).

## CHILD CARE SUBSIDY PROGRAM AND FINANCIAL AID TO FAMILIES

### CHILD CARE SUBSIDY PROGRAM

A good way to supplement your center’s budget is to take part in the child care subsidy program. The DHHR calls it the [tiered reimbursement system](#).

In this program, providers that meet higher standards of care receive higher subsidies. Once you get a license for your center, you will be eligible to receive Tier I rates. You will only receive subsidy payment for children who qualify for subsidies. After your first year, you are eligible to apply for Tier II or Tier III rates. Tier II and Tier III programs receive [\\$3.00 and \\$6.00 extra daily](#)<sup>5</sup> per full day of care per child. Subsidy amounts also depend on the age of the child in care. Tier III providers must be nationally accredited through the [National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\)](#) or the [Council on Accreditation \(COA\)](#).

If you would like to enroll, please submit a [Tiered Reimbursement Application for West Virginia Child Care Centers](#).

You can also ask questions about the program by [email](#).

### FINANCIAL AID TO FAMILIES

Families in West Virginia have access to financial support to help them pay for child care. The State gives child care certificates to eligible families to pay for services. Families may receive financial help if their monthly gross income is below 150 percent of the annual [Federal Poverty Level \(FPL\)](#). Monthly gross income is income before taxes and deductions. Financial help is also based on the size of the family. Eligible families receive financial aid until their income exceeds 185 percent of the annual FPL. Families with incomes below 40 percent of the FPL are eligible for free child care. Families with incomes between 40 percent and 185 percent of the FPL pay an increasing tuition fee.

You may want to consider working with the [MountainHeart South CCR&R](#) to connect eligible families to the financial support they need to pay for ECE services. The MountainHeart South CCR&R has many resources for parents and caregivers.

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<sup>5</sup> The reimbursement rates listed in this section are effective [March 1, 2021 through December 31, 2022](#).

# TECHNICAL SUPPORT AND RESOURCES

[WV SBDC](#)  
[888-WVA-SBDC](#)  
[AskMe@wv.gov](mailto:AskMe@wv.gov)

## [SUPPLEMENT to Child Care Centers Licensing:](#)

The DHHR has put together a document to help you understand licensing rules. Since the SUPPLEMENT is a long document (150+ pages), you can use the search box (Ctrl + F or Command + F) to jump to a given section.

## [Starting and Operating a Child Care Business – Resource Guide:](#)

The [Child Care State Capacity Building Center](#) has developed a guide with many helpful resources. It has basic steps for starting and operating a successful child care center.

## [Child Care Business Resources: Estimated Start-up Costs:](#)

This webpage has information on startup costs for ECE businesses. It can help you better plan your finances as you take steps to open a center.

## [West Virginia Early Childhood Training Connections and Resources:](#)

The WVECTCR is a program that offers professional development opportunities for ECE workers. It is a network of information with training and technical help for providers. The WVECTCR can offer the support you need to start a quality program. You can contact them at [304-529-7603](tel:304-529-7603) or by email at [tcr@rvcds.org](mailto:tcr@rvcds.org).

## [KEYS 4 HealthyKids:](#)

KEYS 4 HealthyKids is a grant-funded childhood obesity prevention initiative that has been serving West Virginia's kids, families, and communities since 2009. Through policy, systems, and environmental changes (or PSEs), KEYS 4 HealthyKids is on a mission to make the healthy choice the easy choice in the Mountain State. To learn more about how to incorporate best practices in nutrition and physical activity at your center or to register for upcoming training events, follow [KEYS 4 Healthy Kids on Facebook](#) or sign-up for its [newsletter](#).

## [Shared Meal Services:](#)

In 2021, West Virginia's first Central Kitchen was introduced to support meal service throughout child care center regions. Under the leadership of KEYS 4 HealthyKids and Healthy Kids Inc., from-scratch, nutrient-dense, hot meals are prepared in a Central Kitchen location and transported to child care centers daily to alleviate the



burden many centers face in creating and maintaining their food service program. All meals are prepared by trained culinary talent who share in the common mission of providing real food for kids. All recipes are created from-scratch and meet (and exceed) CACFP meal pattern requirements. The project believes in growing and locally sourcing as much food as possible. Vegetables are grown by local West Virginia farmers and freshly cut fruits are served daily. Pureed beans are incorporated into many meals for added fiber and all breads are made from-scratch using wheat grown in West Virginia and milled by the Central Kitchen. For additional information about the Central Kitchen project and meal services in your region, contact Mandy Curry at [mandy@healthykidsinc.com](mailto:mandy@healthykidsinc.com).

## [West Virginia Child Care Centers United:](#)

The WVCCU is dedicated to improving the quality of the ECE industry in West Virginia. It offers professional development opportunities, networking, and resources. The WVCCU is open to child care agencies, centers, or advocacy groups. You can contact them at [304-429-6167](tel:304-429-6167) or by [email](#).

## [West Virginia Child Care Association:](#)

The WVCCA is focused on advancing and establishing quality standards of child care. It provides consultation, education, and training to providers who serve children in need. If you would like to become a member, please contact the WVCCA at [304-340-3611](tel:304-340-3611) or by [email](#).

[CCR&R agencies](#) support providers and the families they serve. The CCR&R agencies offer technical assistance and training to new and existing providers. They also manage the subsidy program and connect parents with child care services and financial aid. Below is a list of counties served by the [MountainHeart South CCR&R](#).

- Braxton, Fayette, Greenbrier, McDowell, Mercer, Monroe, Nicholas, Pocahontas, Raleigh, Summers, Webster, and Wyoming.

#### [Early Care Share West Virginia:](#)

Early Care Share WV is a platform that offers a one-stop location for key resources that will help you save time, reduce costs, and improve the quality of your program. Members have access to ECE policies, forms, guidance, regulations, discounts, and more. For more details, please email [Help@EarlyCareShareWV.org](mailto:Help@EarlyCareShareWV.org).

#### [Experience Adventures in Family Child Care! An Introductory Presentation for Potential Providers:](#)

The [MountainHeart CCR&R](#) has put together a wonderful presentation for potential new ECE providers. It includes questions for you to think about as you consider a career in ECE, basic training requirements, and some of the steps you will need to complete to become a provider.

#### [TRAILS \(Traveling Resource and Information Library System\):](#)

TRAILS is an outreach program that offers resources of interest to providers. That includes one-on-one support and tools to improve the quality of their programs. Tools include books, games, age-appropriate toys, and assistive technology for special needs children. TRAILS is a free program offered by [CCR&R agencies](#). Those in the program receive visits from specialists who travel in a medium sized van. Van visits take place every six to 12 weeks. If you would like to participate, once you get your license, please contact [MountainHeart South CCR&R](#).

#### [Child Care Center Provider Forms:](#)

The DHHR has created a central location for important forms for child care center providers. Make sure you also contact the [MountainHeart South CCR&R](#) to schedule a new provider orientation.

#### [National Child Care Association:](#)

The NCCA has been a trusted, nonpartisan voice for licensed providers of quality ECE programs since 1987. It focuses on promoting the success of licensed providers in quality ECE, including the provision of professional development, advocacy, and community engagement. The NCCA offers [free webinars](#) on an array of topics that are of value for ECE providers.

## BEST PRACTICES IN MANAGING A CHILD CARE BUSINESS

Managing a successful child care business can be challenging. Providers often have access to limited funding and face high operational costs. However, it is still possible to run a sustainable child care center. You can improve your chances of success by following [best practices](#). A solid business and marketing plan can also increase your chances of long term sustainability and success.

A business plan is a document that has your business' goals and explains how and when you will achieve these goals. Your business plan will need to include short term, long term, and alternative plans for various situations, like unexpected expenses/events.

The WV SBDC business coach can help you put together a business plan. You can find their contact information under [Technical Support and Resources](#). The information in the next sections can help you save on startup and operational costs.

### PARTNERSHIP WITH CHURCHES

Whether you are building a center or renovating a space, there are costs that can eat up a large chunk of your budget. Indoor and outdoor equipment can be expensive. For example, [playground equipment can cost](#) you over \$10,000. Commercial kitchen equipment can be costly, too; however, keep in mind that you only need to buy commercial kitchen equipment if you are cooking meals in your center.

A great way to save up on some of your startup costs is to form a partnership with a church. Churches are perfect center spaces because they have nurseries, classrooms, and commercial kitchens. Since their building are often closed on most weekdays, you may also be able to negotiate cheaper rental prices.





## PRE-K COLLABORATION

West Virginia has a [Universal Pre-K program](#) for all 4-year-olds and certain 3-year-olds with special needs. The state created the Universal Pre-K program through a law passed in 2002. Under the Pre-K law, at least 50 percent of classrooms funded by the program must be collaborative. Essentially, Pre-K classrooms must be offered in collaboration with child care centers and Head Start Programs. Currently, 82 percent of Pre-K classrooms in the state are collaborative. Universal Pre-K is part of the State School Aid Funding Formula, so providers that operate Pre-K sites have access to school aid funding. School aid funding is calculated for each eligible child enrolled by October 1 of each school year.

Operating a Pre-K collaborative program is a great way to supplement your center's budget. It can help you offset some of the high costs of providing care to infants and toddlers. You will find that it is more expensive to provide care to infants and toddlers than to older children. Lower staff-child ratios and more strict regulations are just a few of the reasons care for infants and toddlers is more costly.

Below are some requirements you will need to follow if you would like to run a collaborative classroom.

In some counties, you need to have a license for at least one year before you can run a collaborative Pre-K site. Putnam is one of the counties with this rule.

You will also need to prove that there is a need for more Pre-K spaces in your area. A local education agency (LEA) or county board of education can help you assess if there is such a need.

You must follow the guidelines detailed in the [West Virginia's Universal Access to a Quality Early Education System \(WVBE Policy 2525\)](#). You will need to sign an annual [collaborative contract and put together a budget](#) with a county board of education. You must follow county curriculum guidelines and stick to DHHR licensing regulations.

If you would like to offer a Pre-K site, you can contact one of the following groups below.

- The county board of education where your center will be located,
- The [West Virginia Department of Education](#) or
- The program coordinator by [email](#) (click on the "Early & Elementary Learning" tab).



→ Increase revenue by running an Out of School Time program

## OUT OF SCHOOL TIME PROGRAM

Another great way to increase your revenue is running an [Out of School Time](#) program. The program offers activities to children before and after school. Activities can also be offered on holidays and when school is closed for other reasons. Staff-to-child ratios are higher, and regulations are more relaxed for out of school time programs.

Program operators need to register with the DHHR every year. For more information, please read the [Out-of-School Time Child Care Center Licensing Requirements](#). If you would like to apply, please submit a [Registration for Out-of-school Time Programs at Licensed Child Care Centers](#).

## HELPFUL TIPS AND COST MANAGEMENT TOOL

### HELPFUL TIPS

Managing a child care business requires a unique combination of skills. You will need to have a strong knowledge of ECE as well as business management. You will not be just caring for and educating children but also running a small business.

Consider taking advantage of the SBA free online training opportunities. The [SBA Learning Center](#) has great courses you can take at your own pace and time.

Be sure you create a budget from the get-go, and that you stick to it. It will help you better control your finances and avoid going into debt.

To be successful, your enrollment will need to be at around 80 percent of your capacity. The issue is that your enrollment will vary.

Be sure that your primary focus is on the quality of your program, and that you let quality guide your business decisions.

You will need to build a culture of quality and safety as well as make sure your staff always do what is best for the child. You want to have the best staff to help you achieve your program goals, and staff training can help you achieve that.

Avoid attempting to expand your business too soon, which can harm both your finances and your chances of succeeding.

### **SMALL BUSINESS TOOLS AND SUPPORT**

Managing a child care business requires you to be pennywise. You will need to know how to manage your staff and finances well to succeed. This is so important: it can make or break your business.

Thankfully, you do not need to worry about taking care of all of this by yourself!

There are online tools that can help you do your own accounting and financial management. [QuickBooks](#) is an example of a useful tool that can help you manage your staff and budget. It helps new and existing businesses manage their payroll, track expenses, staff hours, and much more.

[QuickBooks Support](#) can help you learn how to use and operate QuickBooks.

### **OPERATING AS A 501(C)3 NONPROFIT**

Several in-state and out-of-state providers say that the best way to run a center is by operating as a 501(c)3 nonprofit.

It can make the difference between operating profit and operating loss. Providers have limited sources of revenue and high operational costs. Parent tuition and federal and state subsidies are the main sources of revenue for a center while staff salaries and compliance with regulations are the main expenses.

A nonprofit center gives you access to state and federal dollars that may not be available to private for-profit providers, including grants, public funding, and aid programs. Also, your center would have tax exemption benefits.

If you would like to operate as a 501(c)3, the West Virginia Nonprofit Association (WVNA) can help you. The WVNA has a [Nonprofit Checklist](#) that can help you get started. WVNA also has [resources](#) on how to launch a nonprofit.

### **COST MANAGEMENT TOOL**

Another excellent resource for providers is a [Cost Management Tool](#). The purpose of the tool is to help those interested in opening or expanding ECE businesses plan their budgets, i.e., better estimate revenue and expenses.

The tool can be edited based on the features of a child care center, facility, or home, including provider type, location, tier level, whether you own or rent the space, and more.

The tool was developed by MBA students with the [Encova Center](#). If you would like to get more information, please contact the WV SBDC business coach.

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→ Several providers say that the best way to run a center is by operating as a

# 501(c)3 NONPROFIT

# CHECKLIST FOR THE LICENSING PROCESS:

## CHILD CARE CENTERS

### BEFORE YOU GET STARTED:

- Contact a licensing specialist
- Reach out to the MountainHeart South CCR&R
- Contact the WV SBDC Business Coach
- Read the Information Packet

### BEFORE YOU BUY, RENOVATE OR RENT A SPACE FOR YOUR CENTER YOU NEED TO:

- Contact the OSFM and the HD
- Check with the licensing specialist to make sure your space meets spatial requirements (sq/ft/child)

### PART 1.) NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND LETTER OF INTENT

#### ONCE THE OSFM AND THE HD HAVE GIVEN THE INITIAL THUMBS UP FOR YOUR CENTER SPACE:

- Get an inspection report from the OSFM
- Get a report from a Lead Risk Assessor (only if the building was built before 1978)

#### TO GET PERMITS TO OPERATE FROM THE HD, YOU WILL NEED TO SUBMIT A:

- SF-99: plan review for your center
- SF-35: plan review for your center kitchen

#### ONCE THE HD APPROVES YOUR SF-99 AND SF-35, PLEASE SUBMIT A:

- SG-49: application for a permit to open a center
- SF-5: application for a permit to serve food

#### ONCE THE HD APPROVES YOUR SG-49 AND SF-35, YOU SHOULD RECEIVE A:

- Permit to operate a center
- Permit to serve food
- Initial inspection reports

#### THE WVDA WILL NEED A:

- Integrated and Pest Management Plan
- Sanitation and Maintenance Report

# CHECKLIST FOR THE LICENSING PROCESS (CONT.)

## ZONING LAWS AND BUSINESS REGISTRATION:

- Register your center with the WVSOS
- Contact the county and municipality about zoning laws
- Create a draft budget with business coach
- Turn in a complete Needs Assessment and Letter of Intent to the DHHR

## PART 2.) INITIAL APPLICATION

- Get Initial Application from the DHHR
- Read Licensing Requirements
- Create a governing body for your center
- Create an estimated budget with a business coach
- Have money to cover six months of operating expenses
- Center director and staff meet basic training/education needs
- Register qualified staff with WV STARS
- Create emergency disaster and evacuation plans
- Fill out an evacuation plan with the county Emergency Services Director

## BACKGROUND CHECKS:

- WV CARES eligibility determination letter for you
- WV CARES eligibility determination letter for your staff

## FINAL STEPS:

- Attach all needed documents to Initial Application
- Turn in a complete Initial Application to the DHHR

## ONCE YOU GET YOUR LICENSE, THE DHHR NEEDS YOU TO:

- Register as a Temporary Crisis Child Care Site
- Submit a Child Care Site Self-Certification Checklist

## OTHER NEEDS NOT CONNECTED TO THE LICENSING PROCESS:

- Create a business plan together with the WV SBDC business coach



| [STARTUP\\_WV@MAIL.WVU.EDU](mailto:STARTUP_WV@MAIL.WVU.EDU)