



Child Day Care Association
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“Starting a Child Care Center”

This publication was prepared by the Child Day Care Association (CDCA) to provide basic information to those thinking about opening a child care center. CDCA offers many services to families and child care providers, including:

- * *Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)* – Professional development opportunities for child care providers, and referrals to families seeking child care;
- * *Child and Adult Care Food Program* – Nutrition education and reimbursement for meals and snacks served to children in child care homes.

To find out more about CDCA, visit our web site: www.childcarestl.org.

This publication contains local, state, and national information on planning considerations for opening a child care center. Local resources listed in this publication cover the metropolitan St. Louis area (St. Louis City, County, St. Charles, Warren). CDCA is the local CCR&R that serves this area. If you live outside the metropolitan St. Louis area, visit the Missouri Child Care Resource and Referral Network (MOCCRRN) website at www.mocrrn.org or call 1-800-200-9017, to find the local CCR&R in your area.

Your local CCR&R can tell you about the number of programs within a zip code, the ages and numbers of children served as well as information about current rates providers in your community charge. CCR&Rs can give you helpful information about providing child care and link you with training opportunities in your area. CCR&Rs also help families locate and select child care. Families looking for child care services are given a list of the programs that may meet their needs. Call your local CCR&R for information on how to become listed (free of charge) as well as the benefits to being listed.

Developing a child care center involves exploration of a variety of issues. Here are some topics that you might want to research as you think about starting a center-based child care program:

- The child care needs of the community;
- Licensing and professional standards;
- Legal requirements;
- Costs of center start-up and operation;
- Obtaining funding/setting fees;
- Facility design for indoor & outdoor spaces;
- Policies and procedures for staff and families;
- Health and safety issues, including disease and accident prevention and emergency procedures;
- Curriculum development;
- Staff recruitment, training, and compensation;
- Appropriate equipment and materials;
- Links with other community services.

- 1. Contact the Child Day Care Association at (314) 531-1412 to learn about our resources for child care providers and for families of children in child care.**

CDCA maintains an updated listing of child care facilities and can provide demographic information about the number of programs within a zip code, the ages and numbers of children served as well as information about current rates that providers in your community charge. CDCA can also link you with training opportunities. Families seeking child care services are provided with a list of the facilities that meet the search criteria. Call for information on how to become listed once your facility is established. To find out more, visit our web site: www.childcarestl.org.

- 2. Contact the Missouri Department of Health & Senior Services, Section for Child Care Regulation at (314) 877-0210** regarding state licensing requirements for the operation of a child care facility. For programs located in Warren County call (573) 882-9399.

A licensing specialist will advise you of the procedures for licensing and provide needed forms for documentation. The licensing specialist can visit a proposed program site to determine its potential for meeting physical space requirements. It is important to be knowledgeable of these requirements as you search for a suitable site, so contact the agency early in your planning stage. The licensing rules and regulations are available on line: www.dhss.mo.gov/ChildCare.

- 3. Contact the local government agency that administers building & zoning requirements/restrictions, and issues business permits and licenses for the child care program site.**

If the program is located in **St. Louis City**, contact The Business Assistance Center at (314) 622-4120 for guidance as you work through the maze of legal requirements. A city license is required through the St. Louis City Department of Health Child Care Safety & Licensure Unit: (314) 612-5493.

For programs located in **unincorporated St. Louis County**, contact St. Louis County Planning and Zoning Department at (314) 615-2520.

For **unincorporated St. Charles County**, contact St. Charles County Planning and Zoning: (636) 949-7335.

For programs located within **an incorporated city or town** in St. Louis County, St. Charles or Warren Counties, contact the city hall or building & zoning department of that city/town/municipality (you will find the number in the blue pages of the phone book).

Before signing a contract to buy or lease a building, arrange for a site visit from the state licensing specialist and be certain local zoning requirements can be met. It is also suggested that you seek legal counsel to review the contract. If you are considering a building what was previously licensed, arrange to read the file at the Section for Child Care Regulation. Because it held a license previously does not mean that it will necessarily meet current state and local government rules and regulations.

- 4. Contact various agencies that provide resources and training for small businesses:**

Resources for starting a business in Missouri can be found through the Missouri.gov website: <http://www.mo.gov/Business/>. One of the valuable resources sited is **Missouri Small Business Development Program** at www.missouribusiness.net In addition to on-line resources, there are service center locations throughout the state which offer training and counseling services (click

“Find a Center”). You will find information specific to the operation of a child care program at http://www.missouribusiness.net/iag/daycare_child.asp

Child Care Aware provides on-line information on starting a child care business at: <http://getstarted.childcareaware.org/>

MOSourceLink is a free resource that connects small businesses to a wide network of business-building resource organizations in Missouri. These services range from business plan and marketing assistance to web site development, small loan programs and how to make it through various City Hall regulations and zoning issues. Visit the website at: www.mosourcelink.com or call 866-870-6500.

The Small Business Administration: 1-800-827-5722. Workshops are offered locally through the SBA S.C.O.R.E program and numerous on-line publications are found at the web site: www.sba.gov . Two publications specifically address child care: “How to Start a Quality Child Care Business” (MP-29) and “Child Day Care Services” (MP-30). Small Business Development Centers are located throughout Missouri to provide resources and technical assistance.

You can reach the **SBA St. Louis District Office at 314-539-6600**. If you need a business loan, be sure to call or visit the SBA web site. Two specific loan programs through the SBA are:

- **RMI Microloan Program: Call Zola Finch at (800) 234-4971** www.rmiinc.org .
- **Justine Petersen Housing and Reinvestment Corporation at (314) 664-5051** <http://www.justinepetersen.org/> .

Low interest loans may also be available through “**First Children’s Finance-Missouri**” at **1-866-562-6801 (toll free)** which offers loans ranging from \$1,000 to \$75,000 to licensed providers and providers seeking licensure if 20% of the children enrolled for care meet Missouri Child Care Subsidy eligibility guidelines.

The Internal Revenue Service Business Tax Line: 800-829-4933. Visit the web page “Your One Stop Business Resource” at <http://www.irs.gov/businesses/small/index.html> . View links and publications and order the free CD-ROMs “The Small Business Resource Guide” and “A Virtual Small Business Workshop”.

You can also find workshops on starting a small business at area universities and colleges within the continuing education programs. College-credit courses in the management of early child care education programs are offered within the Early Childhood Education Department of these campuses. Ask about the program of courses devised for the child care center program director.

5. Other legal/financial Issues:

In Missouri, businesses can operate under four forms of business structure or organization:

- Sole proprietorship
- Partnership – general and limited
- Corporation – C-Corp; S-Corp; Professional, Not-for-profit; Foreign
- Limited Liability Company – LLC

A description of these forms of business structures and a discussion of advantages and disadvantages can be found in the publication “Starting a New Business in Missouri”. This is available on-line at http://www.missouribusiness.net/docs/starting_new_business_missouri.pdf or contact the **Secretary of State’s Office** for more information.

Anyone operating a business under a name other than their own legal name (e.g., Mary Smith), must register that name with the Secretary of State. The main office is in Jefferson City, MO (573) 751-3200 and there is also a branch in St. Louis located at 111 N. 7th Street, St. Louis, MO 63101, (314) 340-7490. There is a good deal of information on legal issues pertaining to operating a business in Missouri at the website: <https://www.sos.mo.gov> and there you can download the “Fictitious Name Registration” form.

For lawyer referrals, contact the **Missouri Bar Association** at 314-622-4995 or visit www.mobar.org

Liability insurance is not a licensing requirement but all businesses should be sufficiently insured. There is helpful information on the National Network for Child Care at <http://www.nccc.org/Business/liabil.ins.ccc.html> and you find the topic covered on the National Child Care Information Center web site: www.nccic.org . To check on an insurance company contact the Missouri Department of Insurance at 314-340-6830 or <http://insurance.mo.gov/> .

For information on meeting requirements of the **Americans With Disabilities Act**, call the Information Line at 800-514-0301 (Voice) or 800-514-0383 (TDD) or visit the website: <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm> There are links to the ADA Guide for Small Businesses: <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/smbusgd.pdf> and the tip sheet “Commonly Asked Questions about Child Care Centers and ADA”: <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/childq&a.htm>

The **Child & Adult Care Food Program** may reimburse child care providers for the cost of healthy meals and snacks. If you will be operating a licensed Group Child Care Home for up to 20 children, contact CDCA at 314-531-1412 for information on how to participate in the program. Child care center operators contact the CACFP directly at 1-800-733-6251.

Call the local Missouri Department of Social Services (DSS) office for information on the **Child Care Assistance Program** (subsidy payments for child care services). Ask how to obtain a “vendor contract” which must be signed if you are to receive state payment for child care services provided to eligible families. A DSS supervisor will explain the requirements and procedures to be followed.

St. Louis City: 314-877-2400
St. Louis County: 314-426-9600

St. Charles County: 636-940-3170
Warren County: 636-456-3307

There are few **grants** available to the individual or for-profit corporation to start or expand a child care facility. Funds are usually made available for a specified time with application deadlines that must be met. Here are possible grant sources:

Missouri Start-up and Expansion Grant – Dept. of Social Services
Missouri Department of Social Services – Office of Early Childhood: (573) 522-1385
<http://www.dss.mo.gov/cd/early/index.htm>

In St. Louis, contact ARCHS (Area Resources for Community and Human Services) 314-534-0022 or www.stlarchs.org

Missouri Preschool Project Grant

Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education: (573) 751-2095

www.dese.mo.gov

Direct link for grant:

<http://www.dese.mo.gov/divimprove/fedprog/earlychild/MPP/Index.htm>

IFF

Quality improvement/expansion grants to non-profit early learning programs (314-588-8840)

www.iff.org

Information is available on the internet to help with grant writing:

GrantsNet: <http://www.hhs.gov/grantsnet/>

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance: <http://www.cfda.gov/>

National Child Care Information Center: <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/poptopics/fundraising.html>

The Foundation Center: <http://www.fdncenter.org/>

Consider contacting **community service organizations** such as Rotary, Kiwanis, Lions, or Junior League as they sometimes make monetary or material donations to local businesses. Approach the larger companies in the area that may employ families you will serve to see if they might offer any assistance as an employee benefit. Also, look into whether there are opportunities available through the United Way: 314-421-0700.

CDCA sponsors the **Katherine Nelson Early Childhood Scholarship** program, providing financial assistance to early care and education teachers who wish to further their own professional development through college-level education and training. Contact CDCA at 314-531-1412.

6. Child Care Services:

In addition to meeting the legal requirements and handling all the business issues involved in operating a child care facility, the love for children and an understanding of how they learn and develop are essential for providing child care. Caring for one's own children is not equivalent to providing care to other families' children in a group setting. Multitudes of publications are available at bookstores, libraries and on the internet addressing the care of children, child development and early childhood education curriculums applicable to a center setting. A licensed facility must have a qualified program director working full-time (refer to the licensing regulations for the specific educational requirements). All child care providers in a licensed facility must obtain 12 clock hours of child-care related training each year from an approved source.

For information on training workshops throughout Missouri, visit www.mocccrn.org and click on the words "Training and Professional Development" which will link to the Training Calendars for the CCR&R agencies in the network (Child Day Care Association serves the Metro St. Louis area).

Local resources for training and education:

CDCA workshops and classes (314)-531-1412

Area Colleges and Universities offer credit coursework and continuing education workshops at within the Early Childhood Education Department.

Missouri City and County Health Departments provide free health-related training for child care providers:

St. Louis City: (314) 657-1445 St. Louis County: (314) 615-0600 or 522-6410
St. Charles County: (636)-949-7400 Warren County: (636) 456-7474

American Red Cross (314) 516-2740 and area **Hospitals** for First Aid, CPR and other health related training.

Agencies that provide services to families and child care programs:

Parents As Teachers St. Louis City (314) 331-6112
P.A.T. National Center (314) 432-4330 <http://www.patnc.org>.

Head Start: Regional Office (Kansas City, MO) at (816) 426-3981
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/region7/>

Joining **professional organizations** for early childhood educators will provide resources and networking opportunities:

National Association for the Education of Young Children: (800) 424-2460
<http://www.naeyc.org>

The Association for the Education of Young Children of Missouri: (877) 296-2852
<http://www.aeyc-mo.org/>

Black Child Development Institute-St. Louis Affiliate: 314-382-7589
<http://www.nbcdi.org>

Children's Defense Fund: (202) 628-8787 <http://www.childrensdefense.org/>

As you can see, starting a child care business is quite a challenge and can take months, maybe years of planning and preparation. This is basic information to get you started. You will find many other resources as you make your way through this process. Consider partnering with someone whose training and experience complements your own--your strengths might be in child care and child development, while your partner has operated a successful business before (or vice versa). Keep your information organized as you proceed. Familiarize yourself with the early childhood field to learn about the needs, challenges and professional opportunities of child care in your community.



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