

I. CHAPTER OVERVIEW

General information about North Carolina's licensing requirements for [child care centers](#) is given in this chapter. For information about the requirements for child care centers to participate in the Subsidized Child Care (SCC) Program, refer to [Chapter 16: Approval and Enrollment Procedures for Licensed Facilities](#).

II. STAR RATED LICENSE SYSTEM

North Carolina's star rated license system reflects the quality of child care programs and allows programs to be recognized for providing higher quality care. Child care center operators can voluntarily apply for a two through five star rated license when they have been in operation for at least six (6) months. Operators receive a one star license unless they choose to be assessed for a higher level license.

A star rating of two to five stars is based on program standards and staff education. The program standards component includes the environment and level of care a child receives at the center. The staff education component refers to the early childhood educational level and experience of the child care program staff.

Although not a component of the rated license, a child care program must maintain a 75% compliance history.

The Division's website provides information about the star rated license requirements.

III. MANDATE FOR LICENSURE

A. Determining Need for Licensure

Any program that meets ALL of the following criteria must be licensed by the Division of Child Development (DCD) as a child care center:

1. Care is provided to three (3) or more children on a regular basis of at least once per week for more than four (4) hours per day.
2. The children in care are not in their own home and care is provided for more than two (2) preschool age children or more than eight (8) school-age children who are not all related to the provider.
3. The children are in the care of someone other than their parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, first cousins, step and great relationships, guardians, or full-time custodians.