

## What Is a Child Care Business?

Child care businesses include small family child care homes, large family child care homes, and child care centers that provide non-medical care for children less than 18 years of age, on less than a 24-hour basis.

## Family Child Care Homes

Provide care for children under age 18 in the home of the service provider, including any children residing in the home, and will be classified as either a large or small child care home. A small family child care home has a maximum capacity of 8 children; large family child care homes have a maximum capacity of 14 children. Operation of a family child care home may require:

- A State of CA [Family Child Care Home License](#)
- A [fire safety clearance](#) from the Fire-Rescue Department's Community Risk Reduction Division (for large family child care homes)
- A City [Building Permit and Fire Permit](#) for any alterations to the home
- Per SB234, effective 1/1/20, cities/counties cannot require a business license nor zoning permit for small or large family child care homes.



## Child Care Centers

Provide care for any number of children under age 18 years of age in any facility that is not a family child care home. To operate, a child care center may require:

- A State of [California Child Care Center License](#)
- A [fire safety clearance](#) from the Fire-Rescue Department's Community Risk Reduction Division
- A City [Business Tax Certificate](#)
- A City [building permit and fire permit](#) for any alterations to the facility
- A City [Conditional Use Permit \(CUP\)](#) may be required in certain zones

## Child Care Operating Regulations

The City of San Diego regulates child care centers as commercial services, and there are different permits and processes required, depending on the zone (location type) a facility is operated in. In most commercial zones, child care centers are permitted with limited use (see [Municipal Code, 141.0606](#)). In most residential zones, a Conditional Use Permit is required. Approvals for CUPs are granted at the discretion of a City decision-maker after a review process and may require a public hearing. (Since the passage of SB234, effective January 2020, no zoning permit or fees can be required by a city or county for small or large family child care homes.)

## Child Care Centers in Neighborhoods

This is important: Adhering to the regulations for facility location, traffic and circulation, parking and drop-off zones, site design and open space, number of children proposed, noise control, and facility operation will help to achieve a measure of compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood. Expect to submit an operations and management plan that shows and provides details on these aspects of your perspective center during the permit process.

## Getting Help with Regulations and Permits

Before you invest in a child care business, contact the following experts who can help you understand requirements, costs, and the path to the successful launch of your business:

- Talk with staff at [Community Care Licensing \(CCL\)](#)
- Seek no-cost assistance from the City's [Economic Development department](#)
- Schedule a [Virtual Counter appointment](#) with staff in the City's Development Services Department to learn about applicable zoning and building regulations. Consult with professional designers with experience in [designing child care centers](#)

## ***Fees and Processing Time***

Fees that may be associated with a child care business can be found at the links shown below. The processing time for a Conditional Use Permit processed in the Development Services Department typically takes six to nine months to process from the date the application is filed. Building permit processing times at DSD may vary. Click [here](#) to view average permit timelines at DSD.

### **City & CCL Fees**

- Business Tax Certificate - [Rates and Fees](#)
- Development Permit Fees (including Conditional Use Permits) - [Information Bulletin 503](#)
- Building Permit Fees - [Information Bulletin 501](#)
- Community Care Licensing - [Fees](#)



## ***More Help with your Child Care Business***

Before you invest in a child care business, contact the following experts who can help you understand requirements, costs, and the path to the successful launch of your business:

- Child Care Technical Assistance Project, [Learn how to start a child care business](#)
- YMCA Childcare Resource Service, [Child Care Initiative Project](#)
- Child Care Law Center, [For child care providers](#)

## **Resources**

**City of San Diego, Development Services Department**  
619-446-5000

[www.sandiego.gov/dsd](http://www.sandiego.gov/dsd)  
[Use Permit Application Package](#)

**City of San Diego, Economic Development Department**  
619-236-6700

<https://www.sandiego.gov/economic-development/>

**City of San Diego, Fire-Rescue Department**  
619-533-4300

<https://www.sandiego.gov/fire>  
[Fire Inspections](#)  
[Fire Permits](#)

**Community Care Licensing Division**

<https://www.cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/child-care-licensing>

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