The City of Detroit is committed to the availability of quality child care to our residents. This toolkit is a companion guide to the city’s Open for Business Guide which can be found at degc.org/small-business/small-business-resources/ and offers important licensing, permitting, and opening information specific to child care businesses. Child care businesses in the state require a license through the State of Michigan’s Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) and this process is separate from the requirements to open a business in the city. This guide will offer direction on both, however, more details on the LARA process can be found at their website michigan.gov/michildcare under the ‘Licensed Providers’ tab or by calling LARA’s Detroit Field Office at (313) 456-0380.

See out-of-date information or have feedback? Contact us at EarlyEd@detroitmi.gov
Getting Started

Before you move forward, it is important to know the categorization of your child care business. Your business's size will determine what requirements you'll have to meet to open and affect application costs, staffing needs, utility costs, and more.

Here are some questions you might consider when deciding how big you want your childcare business to be:

- Do you want to work in your home? With others?
- Will you be able to meet the staffing requirements required for a center? (See LARA website for more details about staffing requirements)
- Will you be able to cover overhead costs like utilities, taxes, and maintenance of a center?
- Is the size of your property ideal for the kind of business you want?
- Will your business provide care to specific age groups (infants and toddlers, school-age children) or meet other special needs (night-time care, transportation), special licensing requirements may apply

With this in mind, decide what kind of business you'd like to be licensed for:

Family Day Care Home
Home-based childcare for up to 7 unrelated children for less than 24 hours a day

Group Day Care Home
Home-based childcare for up to 12 unrelated children for less than 24 hours/day (requires conditional land use hearing, fees)

Child Care Center
A facility in a commercial building that cares for more than 12 children for more than 2 weeks in a row

The licensing process generally takes 3-6 months after you submit the needed materials and for child care centers, city inspections and permits can take longer than expected.

Navigating the Zoning Process

Child Care Businesses need to consider zoning designations and potential zoning costs when planning where to open their business.

Where does zoning allow child care centers? You can find out how your property is zoned by visiting permits.detroitmi.gov and clicking the “zoning portal” icon.

Potential Costs

- Preliminary Plan Review (Free)
- Preliminary Plan Consultation (Optional—$250 for consultation, $350 for consultation with Fire Department)
- Permitting Fees (starting at $150, depends on construction scope and remodel costs)
- Inspection Fees ($134 for each inspection, number inspections required will depend on permitting scope)
- Special Land Use Hearing (Required for Group Day Care Homes—$1000. The Buildings, Safety Engineering & Environment Department will arrange a payment plan for providers with payments as low as $50/month, contact the Zoning Division at (313) 628-2603

Questions & concerns about this guide can be sent to EarlyEd@detroitmi.gov
Licensing Process

For child care licenses in the State of Michigan, all providers:

- Must complete a comprehensive background check and fingerprinting
- Get medical clearance and provide tuberculosis tests results to LARA
- Family and Group Day Care licenses require background checks and fingerprints for everyone in the household over the age of 14

In addition to general state licensing requirements, **Group Day Care Homes** and **Child Care Centers** have to take some extra steps to be in compliance with the city:

**Group Day Care Homes** are approved on a case by case basis. In order to receive a zoning approval letter as required by LARA for group licenses, child care businesses must:

- Complete Special Land Use Zoning Application
- Plot Plan (Formal Site Plan Review Not Required):
  - Property lines
  - Property dimensions
  - Outdoor space
  - Floor plans (only required for levels where children will be)
  - Photos of the home exterior (used in place of elevations)
- Conditional Land Use Hearing. Cost is $1,000. BSEED will arrange a payment plan for providers with payments as low as $50/month after a $100 down payment. More information: Zoning Division, (313) 628-2603
- Participate in a public hearing, scheduled by BSEED, which gives neighbors the opportunity to understand and voice concerns about how your business could impact the community. A notice will be sent out to neighbors within 300’ and posted at your home.

**Child Care Centers**, specifically those whose facilities are new construction or being renovated before opening, will have to undergo plan reviews and building permitting ahead of construction and licensing. See phases 3 and 4 of the Open for Business guide for more details on construction and permitting with the city.

If approved, you will receive a conditional land use grant
- Register conditional land use grant with Wayne County Register of Deeds
- Submit building permit application, copy of registered grant, and plans for change of use permit to BSEED.
- Obtain inspections and approvals by calling (313) 224-3202
- Apply for a final certificate of occupancy in the BSEED offices, Room 408, 2 Woodward Ave, Detroit, MI, 48226. Please allow 3 days to process the application.
LARA Family & Group Home Provider Orientation

Family and Group Day Care homes must attend an orientation session arranged by their local licensing office. The purpose of the orientation is to review the licensing expectations rules and laws and prepare you for your licensing inspection.

Additional Inspections for Centers

Environmental Health Inspection
The City of Detroit's Health Department completes the environmental health and safety inspection needed by the State (LARA) in order to open a Child Care Center.

• This inspection is typically not required for Family and Group Day Care Homes.
• Arrange an inspection by completing the Environmental Health Inspection Request form which can be found at detroitmi.gov/health
• Complete checklists of inspection items can be found in the LARA Technical Assistance Manual.

Lead & Fire Inspection
Providers opening Child Care Centers must complete and pass an annual fire inspection with a certified fire inspector. Centers in buildings constructed before 1978 must also complete a lead hazard risk assessment with a certified lead risk assessor. Find more information about inspections for child care centers at michigan.gov/michildcare.

Other Resources for ECE Businesses

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Your Journey to Opening a Child Care Business in Detroit

The previous pages outlines a few things you might want to consider before deciding what type of child care business to open. Each has its own licensing and permitting path that includes different timelines, stakeholders, fees and paperwork. We’ve placed these steps into process maps designed to help get your business to the finish line.

The process map for Family and Group Day Care Homes can be found on the following page. For Childcare Centers, please flip to the next page.
Child Care Center Providers

You want to start or expand your childcare center in the city

Will you rent or own your center?

Own
1. Determine if property is city owned and if it’s on the market
2. Check the property’s tax status
3. Consider the feasibility of your project (costs, former use, etc.)

Rent
1. Confirm ownership of property before signing a lease
2. Check rental rates of surrounding area to ensure your rate is fair

New Construction
1. Consider construction costs and timeline
2. Prepare site plans and concept drawings for review

Was the location legally zoned as a childcare center by the city previously?

Yes

No

Will there be new construction or remodeling?

Yes

BSEED Inspections

Certificate of Compliance

No

Preliminary plan review

Plan review + building permitting

BSEED Inspection + certificate of occupancy

Submit application fee, begin LARA licensing

Complete/ pass background checks, FBI fingerprinting

Medical Clearance

Lead Inspection for buildings pre-1975

Fire Inspection

Request health inspection through Health Department

Submit all LARA application materials

Complete home/center inspection

BSEED will double check legal use of the property

GET YOUR 6 MONTH ORIGINAL LICENSE AND OPEN YOUR CENTER!
Contacts

COLEMAN A. YOUNG MUNICIPAL CENTER, 2 WOODWARD AVENUE
Buildings, Safety, Engineering and Environmental Department
BSEED Development Resource Center
Room 434 | (313) 224-2372 | drc@detroitmi.gov | detroitmi.gov/drc

State of MI License & Regulatory Affairs (LARA) Detroit Field Office
3026 W Grand Boulevard
(313) 876-0135

Notes