



Wisconsin Child Care Ratios

“While it may seem like a good idea to simply add more children to a childcare facility, especially if the state-mandated ratios have changed, careful consideration should be given to this potential solution. If children are ultimately less safe and teachers are burning out faster, increasing ratios won’t help the childcare crisis at all.”ⁱ - West Bend Insurance

Potential impacts of high staff:child ratios in child care:

- Increased stress level of caregivers resulting in loss of the caregiver’s self-controlⁱⁱ
- Inability to provide safety in life-threatening situations such as a fire (e.g., The National Fire Protection Association requires in the NFPA 101: Life Safety Code that small family child care homes serve no more than two clients incapable of self-preservation)ⁱⁱⁱ
- Increased levels of illness

Why are low staff:child ratios important?

- Are associated with fewer situations that threaten children’s safety
- Help ensure children receive adequate care and supervision
- Set the state for high-quality interactions between caregivers and children that can promote children’s well-being^{iv}

Federal law requires states to establish standards for staff-to-child (staff:child) ratios for each age group of children receiving care. Standards for staff:child ratios and group sizes are a way to ensure the safety, well-being, and development of children; provide better supervision and care; and provide children with more opportunities to develop social skills by allowing them to interact with a smaller group of children and staff.

Ratios: Comparison by age and state

	Ages	Wisconsin	Illinois	Indiana	Iowa	Michigan	Minnesota	North Dakota	Oklahoma	Wyoming
Infants & Toddlers	Up to 12 months	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4
	12 months -16 months	1:4	1:4 *	1:5	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:4	1:6	1:5
	16 months - 23 months	1:4	1:5	1:5	1:4	1:4	1:7	1:5	1:6	1:5
	24 months - 30 months	1:6	1:8		1:7	1:4	1:7	1:5	1:8	1:8
	30 months - 35 months	1:8	1:8	1:7	1:7	1:8	1:10	1:5	1:8	1:8
	3 years	1:10	1:10	1:10	1:10	1:10	1:10	1:10	1:12	1:10
	4 years	1:13	1:10	1:12	1:12	1:12	1:10	1:10	1:15	1:12
	5 years	1:18	1:17	1:15	1:15	1:12	1:15	1:10	1:20	1:18

ⁱ Eggert, K. (2023). *Childcare ratios: best practices to keep children safe*. West Bend Business Blog www.thesilverlining.com/businessblog/blog/childcare-ratios-best-practices-to-keep-children-safe

ⁱⁱ Miranda, B. (2017). *Higher child-to staff ratios threaten the quality of child care. Higher child-to-staff ratios threaten the quality of child care - Child Trends - ChildTrends*

Howes, C. (1990). Current research on early day care. In S. S. Chehrazi (Ed.), *Psychosocial issues in day care*. American Psychiatric Press.

ⁱⁱⁱ American Academy of Pediatrics, American Public Health Association, National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education. (2019). *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs*. nrckids.org/files/CFOC4%20pdf-%20FINAL.pdf

^{iv} Supervision: Ratios and Group Sizes - Administration for Children & Families childcare.gov/consumer-education/ratios-and-group-sizes