



Promoting Quality in Afterschool Programs Through State Child Care Regulations

Promoting Quality in Afterschool Programs through State Child Care Regulations, a strategy brief from the Child Care Bureau's Afterschool Investments Project, describes child care licensing regulations and the challenges that states face in applying them to afterschool programs. State child care regulations seek to ensure the basic health and safety of children in child care and promote their positive development. Afterschool programs—which occur in a range of settings—have diverse goals, and may not look like traditional center-based child care—may be challenged in efforts to meet these licensing requirements.

Specifically, state child care agencies may be challenged in:

- Crafting regulations that are flexible enough to apply to all afterschool programs, including those that take place in schools or other non-traditional child care settings;
- Determining which regulations should apply to these varied programs and settings, some of which may already meet health and safety requirements for other agencies;
- Addressing the perspectives of the multiple sponsors and purposes of afterschool programs in policy.

Many states address these challenges by developing licensing standards with a specific focus on the unique needs of school-age care programs. States may do so by developing separate school-age care regulations, supplemental sections to their licensing regulations or embedded requirements for school-age care programs throughout their child care regulations. As of 2005, 13 states have created separate school-age child care requirements as part of their licensing standards.

Throughout these separate, supplemental or embedded requirements, states have typically adapted one or more of the following components of their licensing requirements:

- Physical plant requirements
- Child-staff ratios and maximum group size requirements;
- Staff qualifications and background;
- Program activities; and
- Health and hygiene requirements.

Afterschool Investments has highlighted examples of specific challenges and state strategies in each of these five areas. (These examples are summarized on pages 2-5 of this handout.)

Finally, many states are considering ways to align child care licensing with other state strategies that promote afterschool program quality. In some cases, state-level groups, networks of coalitions focused on afterschool programs have partnered with state child care leaders in building common ground or explicit linkages between licensing and afterschool program quality standards.

To learn more about this topic, please visit the Afterschool Investments Project website, <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/afterschool/>, to access the *Promoting Quality in Afterschool Programs through State Child Care Regulations* brief.

Challenges and Strategies for Licensing Afterschool Programs

Some states have found ways to adapt their policies to address the licensing challenges evident across varying afterschool program settings, approaches, and circumstances.

	Challenges	State Strategies
Physical Environment	<p>Age-Appropriateness. Physical plant requirements targeted to young children may not always be appropriate for school-age children. For example, the number of available toilets or sinks per child may be different for providers serving older children.</p>	<p>Thirteen states have separate school-age care regulations that address safety and health concerns specific to school-age children. States also address the needs of older children through supplemental regulations or provisions embedded throughout regulations. For example, Oklahoma requires child care centers for younger children to have one toilet and one sink for every 15 children. In contrast, school-age programs are required to have one toilet and one sink for every 25 children or one toilet and one sink for every 50 children with a minimum of two toilets and two sinks and separate facilities for males and females.³⁵</p>
	<p>Different Settings. Physical plant requirements devised for child care centers may not be well suited for public schools, youth centers, or parks and recreation facilities where many afterschool programs reside. Public schools, for example, already meet physical plant requirements monitored by state departments of education in order to serve children during the day. In states where public schools are not exempt from child care licensing, schools may face duplicative and potentially contradictory requirements from multiple agencies. Similar challenges exist, for example, for parks and recreation sponsored programs or programs operating in youth centers.</p>	<p>In South Dakota, child care regulations developed in 2001 recognize building codes and construction rules governing schools. These new regulations have eliminated the need for public schools seeking a license to submit floor plans to both education and child care agencies.</p> <p>Washington applies the same building code standards, the International Residential Code of the International Code Council, to all publicly supported facilities (e.g., schools and centers) in order to streamline physical plant regulations.</p> <p>States can also provide training for licensing regulators on the diversity of school-age program settings, especially for older children, and recognize the ways that school buildings and other settings are monitored by education or other</p>

		systems to eliminate duplicative or conflicting regulations.
	<p>Limited Capacity to Meet Regulations Programs located in schools or parks and recreation facilities might not be able to afford the cost of major physical plant changes. Even if funding is available, programs might lack authority over the physical plant required to make adaptations (e.g., a community-based organization using space at a school or church).</p>	<p>Many states provide training and technical assistance to providers to help them upgrade facilities and make other changes in order to meet licensing requirements. States also sometimes provide funds to programs to improve quality. For example, the Illinois Quality Counts mini-grants program provides funds to providers, coupled with technical assistance from child care resource and referral agencies, to help providers meet physical plant and other requirements for licensing.³⁶</p>
<p>Child-Staff Ratios and Group Size</p>	<p>Age-Appropriateness. Regulations around child-staff ratios and group size promote adequate supervision and individual attention for each child in care. However, the amount of individual attention needed varies greatly by age and requirements for providers serving younger children may be overly stringent for school-age programs.</p>	<p>Some states have two sets of requirements-- one for preschool-age children and one for school-age children. Others have requirements that change as children get older. For example, Iowa and Mississippi have different ratios for children ages 5 to 9 and children ages 10 and older.³⁷</p>
<p>Staff Qualifications and Background</p>	<p>Appropriate Staff Qualifications for School-Age Care. Regulations on staff qualifications often require child care staff, especially directors, to have an early childhood certificate or an education degree with an emphasis in early childhood education. Such regulations may not capture all the competencies sought in afterschool providers. These competencies can be obtained through a degree in elementary or secondary education or arts education or enrichment and/or a background in adolescent psychology and prevention issues.</p>	<p>Rather than require caregivers in licensed settings to hold a degree in early childhood education, Massachusetts, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania allow administrators and lead school-age caregivers to hold relevant degrees, such as in child psychology, human services, or elementary or secondary education.</p>
	<p>Limited Training Options. Although several states recognize staff who hold a child development associate (CDA) certificate, a credential geared to those serving young children, many states do not have an equivalent credential for</p>	<p>Many states and organizations have developed school-age child care (SACC) credentials that are recognized by regulations. These credentials are often aligned with National AfterSchool Association</p>

	<p>professionals serving school-age children. As a result, school-age providers may need to follow the more costly option of earning university credits or a usable CDA.</p>	<p>standards. In 1995 Wisconsin developed a Wisconsin School-Age Credential based on the United States Army model.</p>
<p>Program Activities</p>	<p>Age-Appropriateness. Program activities appropriate for children below age 5 differ widely from those appropriate for school-age children. For example, infant and toddler regulations may include as program goals promoting basic verbal skills and working with parents to ease separation anxiety. School-age children would benefit from activities that support their school-day activities as well as arts, physical activity, and community service. Regulations on program activities afford states an opportunity to promote more explicit linkages between schools and afterschool programs and to incorporate principles outlined in prevention, education, youth development, and other fields.</p>	<p>Some states have developed language in their state regulations that promotes age-appropriate program activities for school-age children.</p> <p>Alaska Excerpt from school-age regulations: "A facility providing care for school-age children shall provide (1) a program that supplements rather than duplicates the child's school activities, providing a change of pace and interest between school and the child care program; (2) freedom appropriate to the age of the child and opportunities for self-reliance and social responsibility; (3) opportunities for school-age children to participate in the selection and planning of their own activities; and (4) in centers, separate space, equipment, and supplies for the school-age children.</p> <p>Delaware Excerpt from school-age regulations: "Children shall have the opportunity to take responsibility consistent with their ages for planning, carrying out, and evaluating their own activities."</p>
<p>Health and Hygiene</p>	<p>Inconsistent or Duplicative Regulations for School-Based Programs. Health and hygiene regulations, though critical for all programs serving children, may be inconsistent across education, child care, and other systems. Often two or more sets of requirements are duplicative, asking programs to provide the same information to two agencies (e.g., verification of student health through immunization records). Multiple sets of regulations can also result in different requirements for how programs must maintain their facilities to ensure children's health. For example, in some states, school-based programs must</p>	<p>Several states allow a participant's enrollment in school to be proof of adequate health, because schools usually require immunization records upon enrollment. For example, the North Carolina Division of Child Development, working with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, determined that school-based programs already have children's medical and immunization information on file and already meet licensing requirements in this area.</p> <p>Also in North Carolina, sanitation requirements for programs serving only school-age children were revised</p>

	<p>comply with one regulation that specifies the type of bleach used to clean for afterschool programs and another regulation that specifies a different type of bleach for cleaning during the school day.</p>	<p>so tepid water was not required. Allowing school-age programs to use cold water enabled them to meet licensing requirements</p>
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³⁵ *Oklahoma Administrative Procedures Act: Licensing Requirements for Child Care Centers, Section 11: Physical Facilities (1/2005) and Part 14: Licensing Requirements for School-age Programs and Summer Day Camps, Section 229: Physical Facilities (10/01/2004)*, at <http://nrc.uchsc.edu/STATES/OK/oklahoma.htm>.

³⁶ Note that this particular example is not specific to school-age care. See page 174 of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Child Care Bureau, *Child Care and Development Fund Report of State Plans FY 2004-2005* (Vienna, Va.: National Child Care Information Center, 2005), at <http://www.nccic.org/pubs/stateplan/>

³⁷ Sarah LeMoine, *Child Care Center Licensing Regulations (August 2004): Child:Staff Ratios and Maximum Group Size Requirements* (Vienna, Va.: National Child Care Information Center, August 2004), at <http://www.nccic.org/pubs/cclicensingreq/ratios.html>.