

A top-down view of several people's hands stacked together in a circle, symbolizing teamwork and collaboration. The hands are of various skin tones and are wearing white or light-colored shirts. One person has a watch on their wrist. The background is a plain, light color.

Is Opening A Child Care Program Right for You?

Do you have a basic knowledge of Child Development and a Passion?

You don't need to be a PhD expert, but you should feel confident in:

- Age-appropriate activities
- Behavior guidance (not just discipline, but teaching)
- Safety and supervision
- Recognizing developmental milestones and delays

If you've worked with kids in a daycare, preschool, or similar setting, that's a strong sign.

Watching one child is very different from managing 6–12 (or more). You're likely ready if you:

- Can handle multiple kids with different needs at once
- Stay calm under stress and noise
- Can manage routines (meals, naps, transitions) smoothly

If you haven't done this yet, that's one of the biggest gaps to fill first.



You have read and understand Colorado Child Care Licensing Rules and Regulations

In Colorado, child care is regulated by the Colorado Department of Early Childhood. You'll need to understand:

- Licensing type (home-based vs center)
- Background checks
- CPR/First Aid certification
- Required training hours
- Public Health Department rules around child care
- Child-to-staff ratios
- Home safety inspections (if applicable)

If you've already looked into these and they don't feel overwhelming, that's a great sign.



Do you have a clear business plan?



You have a clear business plan (even a simple one)

You don't need a fancy format, but you should know:

- Who you'll serve (ages, hours, full-time vs part-time)
- Your pricing and how it compares locally
- What the demand is in your area
- Estimated costs (food, supplies, insurance, rent if applicable)
- How many children you need to break even

If you're guessing here or haven't done your research, it's worth slowing down before starting.

Consider the type of program you want to open:

There are different types of child care programs in Colorado, so finding the right type of program to start is essential.



FFN (Family, Friend and Neighbor)- This type of care is exempt from child care licensing requirements. FFN providers care for four or fewer children in their home.

FCCH (Family Child Care Home)- This type of care is licensed care for five or more children being cared for in a home setting. This type of license limits how many infants and toddlers you can care for.

Small Child Care Program- This type of program is generally one classroom and provides care for five to fifteen children. This type of program is subject to licensing rules and regulations.

Large Child Care Program- This type of licensed care is in a facility that cares for more than 16 children. These are generally larger programs that have multiple classrooms for different ages of children

You're financially and emotionally prepared

- Child care businesses take time to stabilize. Ask yourself:
- Can I handle inconsistent income at first?
- Do you have funding or can you obtain a loan to open the program and cover start-up costs?
- Do I have savings or a backup plan?
- How will you fund your business if there are gaps in enrollment?
- Am I okay with long days and high responsibility?
- How am I going to take care of myself and my staff to avoid burnout?
- Burnout is one of the biggest risks in this field.



Your space (or planned space) is suitable for child care

Whether at home or a center, you'll need:

- Safe indoor and outdoor areas
 - Consider art, science, blocks, cozy areas, books, etc.
 - Consider what your outdoor space might be
 - Think about diaper changing and potty training if you are doing infants and toddlers
- Areas in your home that will need to be blocked off with baby gates
- How you will feed the children
- Childproofing
- Enough room per child (required by licensing)
- Clean, organized setup



Communication with families and parents



A huge part of the job is:

- Giving updates (good and bad)
- Creating policies and procedures
- Basic accounting and understanding a budget
- Handling concerns professionally
- Setting boundaries (policies, payments, behavior expectations)
- You might encounter challenging parents or child behavior, what resources do you have?
- What will you do if you have a child you suspect has special needs?

Readiness Checklist

Experience & Skills

- I've cared for **multiple children at once** (not just babysitting one or two)
- I can **manage challenging behaviors calmly** without losing control
- I understand **age-appropriate expectations** (I don't expect toddlers to act like preschoolers)
- I can plan a **structured daily routine** (meals, naps, learning, play)
- I know how to **engage kids without relying on screens**

Safety & Responsibility

- I know basic **child safety practices** (sleep safety, choking hazards, supervision)
- I'm willing to get and maintain **CPR/First Aid certification**
- I feel confident being the **responsible adult in emergencies**
- I can stay alert and attentive for **long periods without distraction**

Licensing & Rules (Specific to Colorado)

- I've looked into requirements from the Colorado Department of Early Childhood
- I understand there will be **inspections, paperwork, and regulations**
- I'm willing to follow **strict ratios and policies**, even when inconvenient
- I'm okay with my program being **monitored and evaluated**

Business Readiness

- I know how much I'll charge and **why I chose that rate**
- I've estimated my **monthly expenses vs income**
- I understand I may not be full right away
- I'm comfortable enforcing **payment policies (late fees, contracts, etc.)**
- I'm prepared to handle **taxes, recordkeeping, and budgeting**

Emotional Readiness

- I can handle **stress, noise, and constant activity** daily
- I won't take children's behavior **personally**
- I'm patient even when kids are **crying, defiant, or tired**
- I'm okay with **limited breaks during the day**
- I still feel positive about this work even on **hard days**

Readiness Checklist Continued

Working With Parents

- I'm comfortable having **difficult conversations** (behavior, late payments, concerns)
- I can stay professional even if a parent is **frustrated or demanding**
- I'm willing to set and enforce **clear boundaries**
- I can communicate clearly about a child's **progress and needs**

Environment & Setup

- I have (or can create) a **safe, clean, child-friendly space**
- I'm willing to **childproof thoroughly**
- I have enough room for the number of kids I plan to serve
- I can maintain **organization and cleanliness every day**

Lifestyle Reality Check

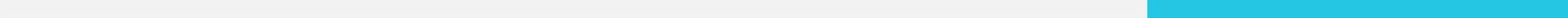
- I'm okay with **early mornings and long days**
- I understand this is **not just “playing with kids”**—it's work
- I'm ready for **limited flexibility during operating hours**
- I have support (family, backup care, etc.) if I get sick or need help

Motivation Check

- I want to do this for more than just income
- I care about **child development and making an impact**
- I'm willing to keep learning and improving

Simple Scoring Guide (optional)

- **Mostly yes (80–100%)** → You're likely ready or very close
- **Some yes (60–80%)** → You're on the right path, but need preparation
- **Less than 60%** → It's worth gaining more experience before starting



Questions?



Attend an SBDC Child Care Essentials Training!



Essential Business Skills for Child Care Administrators

Grow Your Child Care Business With Expert Guidance



START DATE
April 22, 2026



WHEN
Wednesdays, 6:00 - 7:30 PM



LENGTH
4 Weeks



LOCATION
Online (Live)



NO-COST



REGISTER NOW