

ARLINGTON COUNTY GUIDELINES FOR

**How to
Open,
Operate,
and Expand**

a Child Care Center



ARLINGTON
VIRGINIA

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Abbreviations to help you along the way:

AED	Arlington Economic Development - BizLaunch
CO	Certificate of Occupancy
CPHD	Department of Community Planning, Housing, and Development
DES	Department of Environmental Services
DHS	Department of Human Services
DPR	Department of Parks and Recreation
FEIN/EIN	Federal Employer Identification Number
ISD	Inspection Services Division
NVCFM	Northern Virginia Certified Food Manager
PMP	Parking Management Plan
VDSS	Virginia Department of Social Services

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Are you interested in operating a child care center in Arlington County? If so, this how-to guide is for you! Arlington County is committed to the development and strengthening of early learning programs for young children, and we thank you for your interest in providing quality child care for children in Arlington.

The information and sample documents included in this guide will support you in becoming a licensed child care program. The guide will outline what you need to do to open, operate, expand, and close child care centers. While anyone is welcome to use this guide, it will be especially helpful for existing and prospective child care center operators. Arlington County looks forward to the opportunity to work with you.

How to Use This Guide

How Do I Know What Stage of the Process I'm In?

Refer to the sidebar on the right side of each page. It quickly indicates which step you're on, which steps you've finished, and next steps.

Steps of the Review Process

1 Preliminary Consultations

2 Child Care Licensing Application

How Do I Find Forms and Applications?

You can find any application, form, document, or webpage that is written in blue at:

<https://family.arlingtonva.us/child-care/child-care-centers/>

How Do I Submit Forms?

Each government agency accepts forms differently. To easily determine your options, refer to the icons to the right as indicators for how to submit a form. Each agency's contact information can be found on page 29.



E-mail



Phone



Online



Mail



In-Person



Fax

Types of Child Care Programs

Child care programs can be grouped into two categories:

child care centers and **family day care homes**.

This guide provides information related to child care centers.

A child care center is defined as:

An entity providing care, education, protection, supervision, or guidance for two or more children under the age of 13 that is not the residence of the provider or any of the children in care, or a facility with 13 or more children. Child care centers include full- and part-time care, cooperative playgroups, parent's day out programs, and preschools/nursery schools.



Exemptions to this definition include:

- Family day care homes
- Summer camps
- Public or private schools (grades 1-12)
- Contracted child care on an hourly basis
- Sunday schools
- Child care programs operated by a hospital for children of hospital employees
- Private schools providing specialized training courses such as beauty schools, dance schools, karate and self-defense schools
- Schools operated primarily for the educational instruction of children from three to five years of age, at which children of three to four years of age do not attend in excess of four hours per day and children five years of age do not attend in excess of 6.5 hours per day

Refer to: Arlington County Code, Ch. 52

Government Regulations

Child care centers in Arlington are regulated by four types of regulations*:

State Licensing Regulations
Code of VA -
Standards for Licensed Child Day Centers



VA Dept. of Social Services (VDSS)

Local Licensing Regulations
County Code Ch. 52



Arlington County Dept. of
Human Services (DHS)

Land Use Regulations
Arlington County Zoning Ordinance



Arlington County Dept. of
Community Planning, Housing,
and Development (CPHD)

Building Regulations
VA Uniform State Wide Building Code



Arlington County Dept. of
Community Planning, Housing,
and Development (CPHD)

*Religious-exempt child care centers are excluded from local and state licensing regulations

CHAPTER 2: Opening a Child Care

To open and operate a child care center, child care applicants must receive approval by the Commonwealth of Virginia, the County Board, and several County departments. Chapter 2 explains how to open a new center or move an existing center to a new location.

The checklist below includes the applications, forms, trainings, and inspections needed to open a child care center in Arlington:

- Preliminary Site Consultations
 - Licensing Consultation Request Form
 - Online Child Care Center Pre-Licensing Orientation
 - In-Person Child Care Center Licensing Orientation
 - Code Consultation
- County Child Care Licensing Application
- Virginia Child Care License
- Special Exception Use Permit
 - Parking Management Plan
- Commercial Building Permit
 - FoodServicePlanReviewApplication
- Trade Name Registration
- Business License
- Apply for a Certificate of Occupancy
 - Food Establishment Licensing
 - Pre-Opening Inspection
- Sign Permit
- Issued Certificate of Occupancy
- Validation Inspection & County Child Care License

Finding a Location

Finding a suitable location is the first step in opening a child care center and can seem daunting to many providers. When looking for a location, prospective programs should keep in mind the following requirements and resources:

HELPFUL RESOURCES

- **AED BizLaunch:** BizLaunch is Arlington's small business and entrepreneurial assistance network and the one-stop-shop for starting or expanding a business in Arlington. BizLaunch can provide assistance with writing a business plan, taxes, permits, licensing, marketing, financing, and finding available locations for child care centers.



Visit: <https://www.arlingtoneconomicdevelopment.com/business-services/start-and-grow-your-small-business/>

- **Risk and Reach Study:** Arlington provides an annual report about children under the age of five and the status of child care in the County, including demographics, work force, risk factors, and school readiness. The study also highlights areas of Arlington where there is a significant need for additional child care programs.



Visit: <https://commissions.arlingtonva.us/child-care-initiative/>

SITE REQUIREMENTS

- **Parking:** 1 parking space per every 10 children in the program
 - For example, a child care center with 100 children would require 10 parking spaces (100 children/10 = 10 spaces)
 - All parking spaces must be located on-site, not on adjacent streets
 - The parking requirement can be modified by the County Board through the use permit process (step 4 of this chapter) with submission of a Parking Management Plan (PMP)
- **Pick-Up/Drop-Off of Children:** Should be accommodated either on-site and/or curbside along adjacent streets that are not classified as major arterial roadways
- **Outdoor Play Space:** 75 square feet per child
 - Although highly encouraged, outdoor play space is not required to be located on the same property as the child care center
 - Individual group play times can be staggered to meet area size requirements

Step 1: Preliminary Site Consultations



Licensing Consultation Request Form - Required

Once a preliminary location or locations are found, prospective child care center applicants must submit a [licensing consultation request form](#) to the County DHS Child Care Services Office. Within 2-4 weeks of receipt of the form, the applicant will be contacted by a Child Care Specialist to schedule a consultation visit to the proposed child care location.

The consultation visit involves an environmental inspection of the site to determine if there are any potential issues and ensure that the location and/or building is properly equipped for operations. A planner from CPHD will also be in attendance to briefly review any preliminary land use issues associated with the site. A full comprehensive review of the land use issues will occur during review of the use permit (step 4).



Send to: Child Care Services, DHS



Online Child Care Center Pre-Licensing Orientation - Required

Child care center applicants are required to review the County's [online child care center pre-licensing orientation](#) prior to starting the licensing process.



In-Person Child Care Center Licensing Orientation - Required

Child care center applicants must contact Child Care Services to register for an [in-person licensing orientation](#). The in-person licensing orientation is required prior to applying for a child care license. The orientation session provides an overview of the licensing process; details of the inspection protocol; and a review of licensing requirements and regulations, indicators of quality of child care, and additional child care related resources. All participants will receive a certificate upon completion; a copy of the certificate must be included in the licensing application packet referenced in step 2.



Contact: Child Care Services, DHS



Code Consultation - Optional/Encouraged

It is highly recommended that applicants submit a free [code consultation form](#) with ISD. While not required, this consultation is encouraged to allow the applicant to discuss elements of construction with building code officials before the project reaches its final design. Each scheduled appointment is allocated one hour. It is recommended that applicants invite their architect and/or engineer to the meeting and bring any architectural or building plans.



Send to: Inspection Services Division, CPHD

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3 VA Child Care License

4 Use Permit

5 Commercial Building Permit

6 Trade Name Registration

7 Business License

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Step 2: County Child Care Licensing Application

Upon completion of the in-person child care center licensing orientation, interested applicants who are ready to move forward in the process must submit a completed child care center [licensing application](#) to Child Care Services.



Send to: Child Care Services, DHS

Step 3: Virginia Child Care License

Child care center applicants are required to apply for a [Virginia state child care license](#) through the VDSS Fairfax Licensing Office, in addition to applying for an Arlington County child care license in step 2. The VDSS' child care license review process is separate from the County's child care license process, and will require additional training and documentation.

Child care center applicants may apply for state licensure at any stage of the process, but it is recommended to begin as early in the process as possible. Review and approval of a Virginia child care license takes approximately 60 days. Once approved by VDSS, keep all documentation of state licensure for verification by the County's Child Care Services Office.



Visit: https://dss.virginia.gov/facility/child_care/licensed/child_day_centers/

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Step 4: Special Exception Use Permit

Arlington County requires a special exception use permit ([use permit](#)) by the County Board for child care centers. Use permits are filed with the Zoning Division (CPHD) which reviews the application for completeness and then assigns the use permit to a planner in the Planning Division (CPHD). To determine when to file a use permit, please review the [County's Filing Deadlines](#).

Use permits take approximately two to three months to review and obtain approval by the County Board. If approved, the use permit will include conditions which address and mitigate any potential land use impacts, such as parking, pick-up/drop-off, and noise from outdoor play. Below is an example of a typical condition included in a use permit:

"The applicant agrees that parents of students attending the program or employees of the child care center shall escort students to and from the child care center at all times."

After the County Board hearing, CPHD Planning Division staff will email the applicant a link to the staff report, which will allow the applicant to apply for a certificate of occupancy from the Zoning Division. The applicant will also receive a letter from the County Board Office informing them of the County Board actions and conditions in the use permit.



Send to: Zoning Division, CPHD



Use Permit Supplemental Documents

In addition to the use permit application and payment, the following information is needed:

- Signed disclosure statement
- Scaled drawing depicting site parking, play areas, fencing, additional structures and on-site circulation for pick-up and drop-off
- Scaled floor plan depicting all areas/rooms where children and their teachers/caretakers will be present
- List of outdoor play equipment, with photos and design details
- Letter of support from the Child Care Services Office
- Letter of support from affected civic associations or provide evidence of outreach or why no civic associations are affected by the child care center
- Pictures of interior and exterior of property
- Property owner consent (if operating out of a leased commercial space)
- Preliminary Parking Management Plan (see pg. 12)

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Providing Parking Off-Site?

Applicants who request to meet their parking requirements at an off-site location must include a written agreement with the property owner of the off-site location in their use permit application. In addition, applicants must demonstrate that:

- Off-site parking shall not result in parking being unavailable for the primary use of the site on which the parking is provided
- Sufficient parking and circulation for pick-up and drop-off of children is maintained on-site
- Off-site parking shall be located near the child care center and accessible by a reasonable walking path



Reducing the Required Number of Parking Spaces?

Applicants interested in reducing the number of required parking spaces for their child care center must submit the following with their use permit application:

- Justification statement describing why the proposed reduction is being requested, why the requested number of parking spaces is appropriate for the site, and the projected percentages of modes of travel for employees and parents (i.e. drive alone, carpool, ride transit, bike/walk, etc.)
- A preliminary Parking Management Plan (see pg. 12)

Planning and DES staff will review the proposed PMP and justification statement to assess whether the requested modification is appropriate and that sufficient parking and circulation for pick-up and drop-off of children are maintained.

Applicants requesting a parking reduction may experience longer review times for their use permit than the two-to-three-month timeline. Once the review is complete, staff will make a recommendation to the County Board to approve, modify, or deny the request to modify the number of parking spaces as part of the use permit, and the County Board will make the final decision.

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PARKING MANAGEMENT PLAN

Applicants must submit a preliminary [Parking Management Plan \(PMP\)](#) with their use permit submittal package. A PMP outlines the location and logistics of on-street and off-street parking, queuing, and pick-up/drop-off. Planning and DES staff will review the PMP to ensure that parking and pick-up/drop-off can be accommodated and/or reduced without impacting the surrounding neighborhood.

A finalized PMP is required before a certificate of occupancy can be issued for a child care center. Arlington County has created a document titled "[Minimum Acceptance Criteria for Center-Based Child Care Parking Management Plans](#)" to assist applicants with this process.



Send to: Zoning Division, CPHD

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Step 5: Commercial Building Permit

Steps of the Review Process



Building permits are needed when there is a proposal for:

- New construction
- An addition to an existing building
- Change of use
- Interior alterations
- An increase in the number of children
- Change in the age of children served

Applicants seeking to open a child care center must file a **commercial building permit application** after the County Board approves the use permit. The associated supplemental documents for the commercial building permit application are listed on the application and vary depending whether the proposal includes new construction, an addition, or interior alterations.

Filing fees are due upon submittal. Upon receipt of the submission and filing fee, an ISD specialist will enter the application information and generate a permit number for the plans. If submitted online, the application will be routed to all appropriate review groups (ISD, Zoning, DES, and DHS) as required. If submitted in person via paper, applicants are responsible for taking the plans to all appropriate County review groups. If the plans are rejected by the County, applicants must make the required edits to the plans/drawings and submit plan revisions to the County.

Throughout the building permit process and depending on the extent of the work, applicants will be required to complete different inspections. Applicants should view ISD's website for a list of required inspections or call the main line at 703-228-3800. For fire alarm and sprinkler systems, call the ISD Fire Inspector at 703-228-3846. The code consultation mentioned in step 2 will inform applicants early in the process about these details.

After all departmental reviews have been approved, applicants must pay for the full cost of the permit and will then receive their permit and placard. Once the permit is issued, construction may begin.



Send to: Inspection Services Division, CPHD

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5 **Commercial Building Permit**

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FOOD SERVICE PLAN REVIEW APPLICATION

If a child care center program plans to cook, prepare, and/or serve food, applicants will need to submit a [food service plan review application](#) along with their [commercial building permit](#). For online submissions, the application will be routed to the Public Health Division only if the applicant checks YES to the building permit application question "Will you be preparing, serving, or selling food?" In-person paper applications must be taken to DHS by the applicant. Please refer to the County's website for review times.



Send to: Inspection Services Division, CPHD



All food service plans must include:

- Scaled floor plan of the food service areas
- Layout of all food service equipment including preparation, storage, dish washing, and plumbing fixtures
- Complete equipment list stating manufacturer and model number of each item, and a method of identifying each item on the food service equipment layout
- Schedule of floors, walls and ceiling finishes, including type of material in the food service areas
- Sample menu
- Proof of a Northern Virginia certified food manager (NVCFM). NVCFM licenses are issued by ORS Interactive, Inc. (see contact information in Additional Resources)

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Step 6: Trade Name Registration

Trade name registration is required for child care center programs that plan to operate under an assumed name. Registration takes approximately two weeks for review and approval. Prior to applying for a trade name registration, every employer must have a **federal employer identification number** (FEIN/EIN). This number is a nine-digit number that the US Internal Revenue Service uses to identify businesses for tax purposes and stays with a business for its operational lifetime.

Child care applicants must also register with the **State Corporation Commission** if they choose to operate as a corporation or limited partnership.



Send to: Office of the Commissioner of Revenue



Visit: <https://www.irs-ein-tax-id.com/> to apply for a FEIN/EIN



Visit: <http://www.scc.virginia.gov/> to register with the State Corporation Commission

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Step 7: Business License

In order to operate a child care center, applicants must obtain a **business license** from the Office of the Commissioner of Revenue. It is illegal to engage in any business without first obtaining a business license. The Office of the Commissioner of Revenue will assign a business license number to the application.



Send to: Office of the Commissioner of Revenue

Step 8: Apply for a Certificate of Occupancy

A [certificate of occupancy \(CO\)](#) is issued when a child care center can demonstrate compliance with all regulations of Arlington County, including laws and ordinances. All CO applications must be filed with the Zoning Division at least one month prior to occupying and opening a child care center. CO applications may be filed at any time after the commercial building permit application and should be filed before commercial building permit inspections are completed.

The Zoning Division will assign a file number to the CO application. Once a number has been assigned to the application, applicants must notify the following agencies of the CO number:

1. Office of the Commissioner of Revenue (reference the business license number)
2. County Child Care Services Office



Send to: Zoning Division, CPHD before 4:30 p.m.

FOOD ESTABLISHMENT LICENSE APPLICATION AND PRE-OPENING INSPECTION

A [health license](#) and [pre-opening inspection](#) are required for child care centers which cook, prepare, or serve food. This process occurs during the review of the CO.

Once applicants have submitted their food establishment license application, they must schedule a pre-opening inspection.



Send to: Environmental Health Program of the Health Division



Prior to a pre-opening inspection, the following items must be available:

- A NVCFM on duty during all hours of operation and the pre-opening inspection. NVCFM licenses are issued by ORS Interactive, Inc. (see contact information in Additional Resources)
- A calibrated food thermometer
- Soap, paper towels, and handwashing signage at all handwashing sinks
- Dish soap, sanitizer (chlorine-bleach or quaternary ammonium), and three sink stoppers
- Sanitizer test strips to test the chlorine-bleach or quaternary ammonium
- All floor junctures covered or sealed
- Weather stripping at all doors that open to the outside
- Thermometers in all refrigerators and freezers. All refrigerators must be 41°F or less. All freezers must be 32°F or less.
- Light shielding or shatter resistant bulbs in food storage or preparation areas
- Hot/cold water at all plumbing fixtures
- The final menus
- An employee health policy (see FDA form 1-B in appendix A)
- A policy or procedure for cleaning up vomit and diarrhea accidents
- A certificate of occupancy number from the Zoning Division

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A [sign permit](#) is required before any sign or advertising is erected, displayed, replaced, refaced or its dimensions altered. A sign permit can be submitted with a CO application, during its review, or after its approval; but a sign permit cannot be submitted until a CO is on file with the County.

A sign permit is processed administratively and can be approved or rejected within five business days if all supporting documentation is complete.

SIGNS ABOVE 40 FT.

The County has different regulations for signs placed above 40 feet. If applicants choose to have a sign that is placed 40 feet or higher on their building, they should contact the Zoning Division for more information.



Send to: Zoning Division, CPHD



Required supplemental documents for signs placed below a height of 40 ft.

- Letter of consent from the property owner
- Two pictures/drawings showing sign placement on building
- Two 11" x 17" pictures/drawings of the proposed sign(s), including dimensions
- Plat showing proposed location of freestanding sign and distance from property lines or any public right-of-way
- Photographs and dimensions of all existing signs on site, including signs to be removed
- Two copies of plans for attachment or structures (to scale)
- Approved or filed CO
- Administrative Change Form if the property is subject to a Site Plan and there has not been a prior approval for the sign through either a Site Plan Amendment or Administrative Change process (to search if your property is subject to a site plan, see the "Is My Property Subject to a Site Plan?" section in the Additional Resources chapter or contact Planning Division staff)

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Step 10: Issued Certificate of Occupancy

Acquiring a [CO](#) is one of the final steps in operating a child care center in a new or altered building or changing the occupancy, location, ownership, or use of a building or property. Upon approval by the Zoning Division, a Zoning Inspector will contact the child care center applicant to schedule an inspection of the child care center.

After Zoning Inspection approval, the applicant should contact ISD to confirm all inspections are completed. Please allow one business day for ISD to confirm that all inspections are completed or to contact the applicant with information on any outstanding inspections or approvals. The final CO will list the maximum number of children permitted for the child care center, which is based on the square footage of the center.

Step 11: Validation Inspection & County Child Care License

A County child care specialist will contact the applicant to schedule an appointment to conduct an [on-site validation inspection](#) once the application is deemed complete. The applicant should notify Child Care Services with their expected opening date. The validation inspection is to assess health and safety concerns, validate license capacity, and provide technical assistance. During the inspection, the applicant must have the following items available:

- Background checks
- Staff records
- Health inspections
- Child records
- Medical clearances
- Sample forms

After completing the DHS validation inspection, a conditional child care license will be issued to the applicant when all areas of noncompliance, if any, have been corrected. A license will not be issued without verification of the CO application number and use permit. The conditional license will be issued for a period of six months to allow the licensee to demonstrate compliance with sections of the regulations which could not be determined during the validation inspection.

A regular [child care license](#) will be issued after the conditional period has ended and is valid for two years. The regular license must be renewed prior to the expiration date. Child care programs must also obtain a Virginia child care license from VDSS before they can operate a child care program.

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CHAPTER 3: Operating a Child Care Center

The County regulates the operation of child care centers in Arlington through a series of inspections. The processes outlined below discuss the County's inspections and reviews once a child care center is open for business.

The checklist below includes recurring inspections needed to operate a child care center in Arlington:

- Use Permit Review
- Business License and Tangible Personal Property Tax
- County Child Care Licensing Inspection
- State Child Care Licensing Inspection
- Fire Inspection
- Food Establishment License Inspection

USE PERMIT REVIEW

County Department: Planning Division, CPHD

The approved use permit for a child care center stipulates when the use permit will go before the County Board for review. Typically, the County Board reviews the use permit one year after the original approval date to ensure that the child care center is operating according to the approved permit conditions. Three years after the County Board review hearing, staff will review the use permit administratively. If no issues arise, staff may recommend no further reviews. CPHD Planning Division staff will notify a child care center operator when their use permit is scheduled for use permit review.

BUSINESS LICENSE AND TANGIBLE PERSONAL PROPERTY TAX

County Department: Office of the Commissioner of Revenue

Child care centers must submit a [business license return](#), and make any payment required, by **March 1** of each year. All businesses are strongly encouraged to file and pay online. Once approved, applicants will receive a business license certificate from the Office of the Commissioner of Revenue. When completing the business license tax return, please include the Certificate of Occupancy issued by the Zoning Division.

In addition to the business license, all Arlington County businesses must file a [business tangible personal property return](#) each year on or before **May 1**. Payments, if applicable, are due each year on or before September 5. Businesses must report tangible personal property owned, leased, or in their possession in Arlington County each year as of January 1.

Child care center operators are required to pay an annual license tax of thirty-five cents (\$0.35) for each \$100 of gross receipts from the business during the preceding calendar year. Instead of the tax rate, a flat fee may apply for businesses with annual gross receipts of \$100,000 or less.

COUNTY CHILD CARE LICENSING INSPECTION

County Department: Child Care Services Office, DHS

Child care centers are inspected for initial licensing, renewal purposes, routine monitoring and when complaint allegations are made against the facility. A [renewal inspection](#) will be conducted for child care centers every two years to determine compliance with Arlington County Code Chapter 52. A Child Care Specialist will conduct an unannounced inspection prior to the licensee's expiration date.

Routine monitoring inspections will be conducted during the license period. A Child Care Specialist will conduct an unannounced monitoring inspection on a routine basis or when deemed necessary to determine compliance with Arlington County Code Chapter 52.

A complaint inspection will be conducted when the Child Care Services Office receives an allegation against the child care center. A Child Care Specialist will conduct an unannounced complaint investigation to determine compliance with Arlington County Code Chapter 52. Complaint investigations may be conducted jointly with other local and/or state agencies.

STATE CHILD CARE LICENSING INSPECTION

State Department: VDSS

Child care centers are inspected by VDSS to ensure compliance with state child care licensing regulations. For more information related to the State licensing inspection process, see the website below.



Visit: <https://www.dss.virginia.gov/family/cc/index.cgi>

FIRE INSPECTION

County Department: Fire Prevention Office, Fire Department

An operational permit and fire inspection are required to operate a child care center in compliance with the Arlington County Fire Prevention Code. A fire prevention permit will be issued for commercial properties one year after acceptance testing and issuances of a CO and each year of continued operation (annually). To begin each annual inspection process, file a [child/daycare application – fire prevention permit](#) with the Fire Prevention Office. An inspection by the Fire Prevention Office will occur at your center within 30 business days of submitting the application.



Send to: Fire Prevention Office, Fire Department

FOOD ESTABLISHMENT LICENSE INSPECTION

County Department: Public Health Division, DHS

If food is cooked, prepared, and/or served at a child care center, applicants will need to renew their [food establishment license](#) annually. All child care centers with a food establishment license must comply with Chapter 9.2, Food and Food Handling Code of the Arlington County Code. Arlington County adopts the current and prevailing FDA Food Code. The Public Health Division inspects based on risk and the food processes performed in the child care center. Each child care center will receive at least two inspections annually.

*Reminder, a NVCFM must be on duty during all hours of operation.



Send to: Environmental Health Program of the Public Health Division

CHAPTER 4: Expanding a Child Care Center

This chapter is for licensed child care centers that are currently open and operating and would like to expand their building space, the number of children, or modify their County Board approved use permit conditions. Child care centers seeking to expand their program by moving to a new location should see Chapter 2 for the full review process.

The checklist below includes the applications and forms needed to expand a child care center in Arlington:

- Preliminary Consultations
 - Change in Operation and Modification Request Form
 - Code Consultation
- Virginia Child Care License
- Use Permit Amendment
 - Use Permit Supplemental Documents
 - Parking Management Plan
- Commercial Building Permit
- Certificate of Occupancy
- Valid Inspection and County Child Care License

Step 1: Preliminary Consultations

CHANGE IN OPERATION AND MODIFICATION REQUEST FORM - Required

Child care center licensees who wish to expand their program must submit the [child care center change in operation and license modification request form](#). Upon receipt of the form, the Child Care Specialist will contact the licensee to schedule an on-site consultation visit at the child care center to determine support of the modification request. This request may also be made during a renewal or routine monitoring inspection while the Child Care Specialist is on site. The consultation visit involves an environmental inspection of the site to determine if there are any potential issues and ensure that the location and/or building is properly equipped for expansion.



Send to: Child Care Services Office, DHS

CODE CONSULTATION - Optional/Encouraged

It is highly recommended that applicants submit a free [code consultation form](#) with ISD. While not required, this consultation is encouraged to allow the applicant to discuss elements of construction with building code officials before the project reaches its final design. Each scheduled appointment is allocated one hour. It is highly recommended that applicants invite their architect and/or engineer to the meeting and bring any architectural or building plans.



Send to: Inspection Services Division, CPHD

1 Preliminary Consultations

2 VA Child Care License

3 Use Permit Amendment

4 Commercial Building Permit

5 Certificate of Occupancy

6 Validation Inspection and County Child Care License

Step 2: Virginia Child Care License

All child care center applicants seeking to expand their program must [amend their state child care license](#) through the VDSS Fairfax Licensing Office, in addition to amending the County's child care license in Step 3. Child care center applicants can apply for state licensure at any stage of the process, but it is recommended to begin as early as possible. Review and approval of a Virginia child care license takes approximately 60 days.

Step 3: Use Permit Amendment

In order to expand building space or hours of operation, increase the number of children, or modify use permit conditions, child care center operators need to file a use permit amendment. [Use permit amendments](#) are filed with the Zoning Division (CHPD) which reviews the application for completeness and then assigns the permit to a planner in the Planning Division (CPHD). To determine when to file a use permit amendment, please review the [County's Filing Deadlines](#).

Use permit amendments take approximately two to three months to review and require approval from the County Board. If approved, the permit will include conditions which address and mitigate any potential land use impacts, such as parking, pick-up/drop-off, and noise from outdoor play.

After the County Board hearing, CPHD Planning Division staff will email the applicant a link to the staff report, which will allow the applicant to apply for a [certificate of occupancy](#). The applicant will also receive a letter from the County Board Office informing them of the County Board actions and conditions in the use permit.



Send to: Zoning Division, CPHD

Steps of the Expansion Process

1 Preliminary Consultations

2 VA Child Care License

3 Use Permit Amendment

4 Commercial Building Permit

5 Certificate of Occupancy

6 Validation Inspection & County Child Care License

1 Preliminary Consultations

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Use Permit Supplemental Documents

- Signed disclosure statement
- Scaled drawing depicting site parking, play areas, fencing, additional structures and on-site circulation for pick-up and drop-off
- Scaled floor plan depicting all areas/rooms where children and their teachers/caretakers will be present
- List of outdoor play equipment, with photos and design details
- Letter of support from the Child Care Office
- Letter of support from affected civic associations, or provide evidence of outreach or why no civic associations are affected by the child care center
- Pictures of interior and exterior of property
- Property owner consent (if operating out of a leased commercial space)
- Parking Management Plan



Providing Parking Off-Site?

Applicants who request to meet their parking requirements at an off-site location must include a written agreement with the property owner of the off-site location in their use permit application. In addition, applicants must demonstrate that:

- Off-site parking shall not result in parking being unavailable for the primary use of the site on which the parking is provided
- Sufficient parking and circulation for pick-up and drop-off of children is maintained on-site
- Off-site parking shall be located near the child care centers and accessible by a reasonable walking path

PARKING MANAGEMENT PLAN

Applicants must submit a preliminary [Parking Management Plan \(PMP\)](#) with their use permit submittal package. A PMP outlines the location and logistics of on-street and off-street parking, queuing, and pick-up/drop-off. Planning and DES staff will review the PMP to ensure that parking can be accommodated and/or reduced without impacting the surrounding neighborhood.

A finalized PMP is required before a certificate of occupancy can be issued for a child care center. Arlington County has created a document titled [“Minimum Acceptance Criteria for Center-Based Child Care Parking Management Plans”](#) to assist applicants with this process.



Send to: Zoning Division, CPHD with use permit

Step 4: Commercial Building Permit



Building permits are needed when there is a proposal for:

- New construction
- An addition to an existing building
- Interior alterations
- An increase in the number of children
- Change in the age of children served



Failure to obtain the required building permit is a violation of the law, however if modifications to a building are not proposed, a commercial building permit is not needed.

Applicants seeking to expand a child care center may need to file a [commercial building permit application](#). The associated supplemental documents for the commercial building permit application vary depending whether the proposal includes new construction, an addition, or interior alterations and are listed on the application.

Filing fees are due upon submittal. Upon receipt of the submission and filing fee, an ISD specialist will enter the application information and generate a permit number for the plans. If submitted online, the application will be routed to all appropriate review groups (ISD, Zoning, DES, and DHS) as required. If submitted in person via paper, applicants are responsible for taking the plans to all appropriate County review groups. If the plans are rejected by the County, the applicant must make the required changes to their plans/drawings and submit plan revisions to the County.

After all departmental reviews have been approved, applicants must pay for the full cost of the permit and will then receive their permit and placard. Once the permit is issued, construction may begin.



Send to: Inspection Services Division, CPHD or through the ePlan Review Portal

1 Preliminary Consultations

2 VA Child Care License

3 Use Permit Amendment

4 **Commercial Building Permit**

5 Certificate of Occupancy

6 Validation Inspection and County Child Care License

Step 5: Certificate of Occupancy

A [certificate of occupancy \(CO\)](#) ensures that a child care center complies with all regulations of Arlington County, including laws and ordinances. All CO applications must be filed at the Zoning Division at least one month prior to expanding a child care center. CO applications may be filed in tandem with the commercial building permits.

The Zoning Division will assign a file number to your application. Applicants should keep this number for their records. The final CO will list the maximum number of children permitted for the child care center, which is based on the square footage of the center.



Send to: Zoning Division, CPHD before 4:30 p.m.

Step 6: Validation Inspection and County Child Care License

A validation inspection may be conducted, if applicable, once the applicant has obtained all applicable permits and is ready for expansion. A modified license will be issued with the requested modification terms listed. The license period will remain the same. Child care programs must also amend their Virginia child care license from VDSS before they can expand their child care program.

- 1 Preliminary Consultations
- 2 VA Child Care License
- 3 Use Permit Amendment
- 4 Commercial Building Permit
- 5 Certificate of Occupancy
- 6 Validation Inspection and County Child Care License

Government Agency Contact Information

American Association of Poison Control Centers

Phone: 1 (800) 222-1222

Arlington County Child Care Services

Address: 2100 Washington Blvd., 3rd Floor, Arlington, VA 22204

Phone: (703) 228-1685

Email: childcarecentral@arlingtonva.us

Website: <https://www.family.arlingtonva.us/child-care>

Arlington County Child Protective Services

Phone: (703) 228-1500

Website: <https://family.arlingtonva.us/child-protective-services/>

Arlington County Fire Prevention Office

Address: 2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 400

Phone: (703) 228-4644

Email (General): fire@arlingtonva.us

Email (Permits): firepermits@arlingtonva.us

Arlington County Health Department (Clinics)

Phone: (703) 228-1200

Website: <https://health.arlingtonva.us/public-health/>

Arlington County Inspection Services Division

Address: 2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 1000, Arlington, VA 22201

Phone: (703) 228-3800

Fax: (703) 228-7048

Website: <https://building.arlingtonva.us/resource/inspection-services-division/>

Arlington County Planning Division

Address: 2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 700, Arlington, VA 22201

Phone: (703) 228-3525

Website: <https://departments.arlingtonva.us/planning-housing-developmentplanning-division/>

Arlington County Zoning Division

Address: 2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 1000, Arlington, VA 22201

Phone: (703) 228-3883

Website: <https://building.arlingtonva.us/resource/zoning/>

Arlington Economic Development – BizLaunch Program

Address: 1100 N. Glebe Rd., Suite 1500

Phone: (703) 228-0808

Website: <https://www.arlingtoneconomicdevelopment.com/business-services/start-and-grow-your-small-business/>

Office of the Commissioner of Revenue

Address: 2100 Clarendon Blvd., Suite 208, Arlington, VA 22201

Phone: (703) 228-3033

Email: business@arlingtonva.us

ORS Interactive, Inc.

Address: 6066 Leesburg Pike, Suite 200B, Falls Church, VA 22041

Phone: (703) 533-7600

Website: <http://orsinteractive.com/>

Public Health Division

Address: 2110 Washington Blvd., Suite 350, Arlington, VA 22204

Phone: (703) 228-7400

Email: ehhealth@arlingtonva.us

Website: <https://health.arlingtonva.us/food-establishment-licenses/>

State Corporation Commission

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 1197, Richmond, VA 23218

Physical Address: Tyler Building, 1300 E. Main Street, Richmond, VA 23219

Phone: 1-866-722-2551

Email: sccinfo@scc.virginia.gov

Website: <http://www.scc.virginia.gov/>

Virginia Department of Social Services – Fairfax Licensing Office

Address: 3701 Pender Drive, Suite 450, Fairfax, VA 22030

Phone: (703) 934-1505

Email: fairfaxlocaloffice@dss.virginia.gov

Civic Associations

Map of Civic Associations: https://gis.arlingtonva.us/maps/standard_maps/civic_associations/civic_association_map.pdf

List of Civic Associations and their contact information: <https://topics.arlingtonva.us/community/civic/>

Is My Property Subject to a Site Plan?

The special exception site plan process is a form of development review which allows for site-specific flexibility in development form, use, and density. Site plans require public hearings before the Planning Commission and County Board. Once approved by the County Board, the development will be subject to site plan conditions which regulate a development's form, use, and density.

Many properties along Arlington's commercial corridors are subject to site plans, including several suitable locations for child care centers. Visit the "My Arlington - Projects" County web page to determine if your property has an approved site plan. The web page can be found here: <https://my.arlingtonva.us/projects?type=Private%20Development&status=Approved,Construction,Complete>

You can search by address in the text box on the bottom left of the web page. If your property falls within the areas highlighted in blue, your property is subject to a site plan. Child care centers on properties subject to site plans do not go through the use permit review process, but instead need to amend the associated site plan. Call the County's Planning Division for more information.

Tips/Best Practices

This section outlines suggested tips and best practices to know and use when opening and operating a child care program.



Payments to Arlington County

Filings fees can be paid with a check made out to the Arlington County Treasurer, debit card, or credit card. Permits for ISD, Zoning, and DES must be made in-person at the customer service counters on the 8th and 10th floors of the Bozman Government Center (2100 Clarendon Blvd.) All credit card transactions include a 2.5% fee, charged by the card processor. MasterCard and Visa cards are accepted, but not American Express.

Community Engagement

Child care center operators should communicate with their neighbors and surrounding community once a location for a center has been identified. Centers should notify the Civic Association(s) they plan to locate within and are adjacent to, if applicable. Operators should work with their neighbors to address any potential concerns about the proposed child care center.

Closing a Child Care Center

Child care center programs which choose to close their center must submit written notification to their Child Care Specialist at least 10 business days prior to closing. The original license must be returned to the Child Care Services Office within five business days of closing.