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What is a staff-to-child ratio and why is it important?

The staff-to-child ratio describes the number of children for whom each child care provider is responsible within a classroom. The staff-to-child ratio is usually stated in numerical terms. For example, if each caregiver cares for 10 children, the ratio is 1 to 10.

Lower staff-to-child ratios are one indicator of a higher-quality program because a child care provider can be more sensitive and responsive to children’s needs if he/she is responsible for a smaller group of children. Staff-to-child ratios differ depending on the children’s age. Because younger children need more direct one-on-one interaction, response, and supervision, staff-to-child ratios should be lower for younger children than for older ones.

Minimum Licensing Requirements (MLR) define the maximum legal staff-to-child ratios for the state. To achieve higher levels in Better Beginnings, lower ratios are required.

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Better Beginnings and staff to child ratios

For Levels 4-6, Better Beginnings requires lower staff-to-child ratios than Minimum Licensing Requirements (MLR). Ratios for programs applying for Levels 4, 5, and 6 will be verified through reports from Childcare Licensing Specialist (CCLS) visits.

Ages	MLR	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6
birth-18 months	1 to 5	1 to 4	1 to 4	1 to 4
18-36 months	1 to 8	1 to 7	1 to 6	1 to 6
2.5-3 years	1 to 12	1 to 11	1 to 10	1 to 10
4 years	1 to 15	1 to 12	1 to 10	1 to 10
5 years +	1 to 18	1 to 18	1 to 18	1 to 15

For more information on staff-to-child ratios go to:

- <https://childcare.gov/consumer-education/ratios-and-group-sizes>
- <https://nrckids.org/cfoc/database/1.1.1.2>