

State Seeking Input on School-Age Ratios

The Department of Social Services, Office of Licensing and Accreditation is hosting **virtual listening sessions** to gather input on the number of school age children (ages 5 and older) allowed per staff member in a licensed center or school-age program. This is an opportunity for parents, providers, and stakeholders to share their thoughts and help guide decisions that impact the safety and quality of childcare in our state.



Why Are We Talking About Ratios?

You may be wondering why the number of children allowed per adult in licensed after school programs is different from what schools allow in regular classrooms. It's a good question – one that's come up recently.

In 2023, South Dakota updated its age guidelines. The ratio for older children was changed from ages six to age five. However, the staffing requirement hasn't changed: licensed childcare centers and school-age programs must still have **one staff member for every 15 children**. Staff-to-child ratios are important because they help ensure children get safe, high-quality care. It's also worth noting that ratio rules vary from state to state. Now, South Dakota is looking for input from families, providers, and community members to help shape policies that best support children age five and older.

It's important to hear from you before any changes are made.

Why Your Feedback Matters

Changing these ratios could have benefits and challenges:

- ✓ May allow more families to join programs
- ✓ Could increase program revenue
- ✓ Savings might be passed along to families
- ⚠ Higher ratios could lead to less personal attention for each child
- ⚠ Staff may need extra training to manage larger groups

Virtual Listening Session Details: These virtual sessions are grouped by audience. Choose the time that best fits your role. **To join a session, please register by October 20, 2025 using the appropriate link below.**

For Owners & Directors of School Age Programs

📅 Date: **Tuesday, October 21, 2025**
🕒 Time: 5:00 PM CST/4:00 PM MST
Registration <https://state-sd.zoom.us/meeting/register/Mq-gEEgtT9yyEazllke1rA>

For Parents and Stakeholders of School Age Children

📅 Date: **Tuesday, October 21, 2025**
🕒 Time: 7:00 PM CST/6:00 PM MST
Registration <https://state-sd.zoom.us/meeting/register/gnx3LTihTS6dWoXWJ-CeLw>

For Staff Working with School Age Children

📅 Date: **Wednesday, October 22, 2025**
🕒 Time: 7:00 PM CST/6:00 PM MST
Registration <https://state-sd.zoom.us/meeting/register/rzzgBCSoReq-Cd0NUWUNPQ>

What Will Be Discussed?

- Why ratios are being reviewed
- Possible changes and what they mean
- Benefits and challenges of changing ratios
- How to stay involved and give feedback

Your voice matters. We encourage parents, providers, and childcare advocacy groups to join the conversation and help shape the future of child care in South Dakota.

Cannot Attend a Listening Session: Please e-mail Child Care Licensing Program Manager, Laura Nordbye for a link to a recording and survey to provide feedback by Oct. 31, 2025. laura.nordbye@state.sd.us