



SC Child Care Centers and **Faith Based Facilities**

When are architect plans required?

DSS Child Care Fire & Life Safety
Guide to Plan Examination and Fire
Inspection Process for New Permits

Child Care Center

Please note that the Code requirements are the same for both **Faith Based** Facilities and **Centers**.

- ❖ Child Care Center, as classified by Fire Codes:
 - are facilities keeping Six (6) or more children for less than 24 hours.
 - are typically “Educational Occupancy” in accordance with the International Building Code.
 - may be classified as Institutional Sub Class 4 (I-4) unless exceptions are met.

- ❖ Educational Facilities include:
 - Facilities sponsored by religious entities
 - Head Start programs
 - Kindergarten in public schools
 - Public or private child care centers
 - **Group Child Care Home** (6-12 children) are classified as “Educational Occupancy” and are considered the same as a Child Care Center

- Facilities licensed or registered by DSS as a Child Care Center or Faith Based Facility must comply with applicable laws, regulations and codes as adopted through the [SC Office of State Fire Marshal](#).
- Please note the facility requirements found in [SC DSS Child Care Licensing Regulations](#).

Once You Receive the DSS Child Care Center Application Packet

- **In all situations** - please contact your [DSS Child Care Licensing Specialist](#).
- Click on the statement that best describes your center:
 - [We plan to build a new child care building](#)
 - [We plan to place child care into an existing building](#)
 - [We plan to add on to an existing child care center](#)
 - [We plan to add children or more children 30 months of age and younger to our existing permitted center](#)
 - [We plan to be a new owner of an **existing licensed center**](#)
 - [We plan to be a new owner of a previous licensed center that is **closed**](#)
 - [We are planning to relocate our existing permitted center](#)
 - [We will be located within an active public school building](#)
 - [We plan to have a Group Child Care in our home](#)
 - [General Information about the plans process](#)
 - [All other situations](#)

“We plan to build a new Child Care building”

NEW CONSTRUCTION

- State law requires that a SC licensed architect prepare plans for your facility
 - An architect with child care center experience is suggested (ask for references!)
 - You may verify an architect’s license on SCLLR “Licensee Lookup”
 - <http://www.llronline.com/>
 - Select “Architects” from the drop down menu
 - Once plans are prepared:
 - One copy of the plans are to be sent to:
DSS Child Care Licensing
Fire & Life Safety
2638 Two Notch Rd., Suite 217
Columbia, SC 29204.

Questions you need to answer for your architect:

- How many children do you plan to keep?
- Will you keep children 30 months (2 ½ yrs) of age and younger?
- What are your hours of operation?
- Will you keep children for 24 hours?
- Will you have equipment for cooking or warming food? If so what type?

New Construction

(continued)

- Your architect will determine if a fire alarm system is required:
 - Along with your architect, you will need to choose a SC licensed fire alarm contractor
 - A contractor with child care center experience is suggested (ask for references!)
 - You may verify the contractor’s license on “Licensee Lookup”
 - <http://www.llronline.com/>
 - Select: Burglar/Fire Alarm And Fire Sprinklers
 - Once the fire alarm construction documents are prepared:
 - One copy of the plans are to be sent to:

DSS Child Care Licensing
Fire & Life Safety
2638 Two Notch Rd., Suite 217
Columbia, SC 29204
 - Fire Alarm plans may also be a part of the architect plans.
 - Have your contractor coordinate with a DSS Fire & Life Safety Inspector and the local jurisdiction for the fire alarm system acceptance test.

New Construction

(continued)

- Your architect will help determine if a commercial hood and extinguishing system is required:
 - A commercial hood and UL 300 compliant automatic extinguishing system is required when using surface cooking appliances such as a Stove (commercial or residential) or Hot Plate.
 - As an alternative, some facilities use Microwaves, Crock Pots or stand alone ovens installed according to the manufactures instructions.
 - You will need a licensed fire equipment dealer to install the automatic extinguishing system.
 - You may verify the contractor’s license on “Licensee Lookup” <http://www.llronline.com/>
 - Select: Fire Marshal Equipment Dealer
 - Have your contractor coordinate with the DSS Fire & Life Safety Inspector and local jurisdiction for a hood system acceptance test.

Construction or Renovations

- Remember to apply for local permits!
- Start building or remodeling after plans are approved
 - If you build before having approved plans, you build at your own risk!
 - Starting construction before plans are approved may delay the process and be costly to you.
- Continue working with DSS- Child Care Licensing on completing your licensing packet
- Near completion
 - Contact [DSS Fire & Life Safety](#) inspector to arrange for a joint inspection that includes the local jurisdiction to complete the joint acceptance tests.

See [General Information about the plans process](#)

Or [return to list](#)

“We plan to place child care into an existing building”

An existing structure is treated the same as for new construction.

Also, verify the building does not meet one of the other selections on the list.

“We plan to add on to an existing child care center”

- [The addition is treated the same as “New Construction”.](#)
- The architect will verify whether the addition only or if the entire facility is required to meet new codes.
- If the addition involves [care for children 30 months old and younger](#), all children within that age group will need to be kept and maintained in an approved room that complies with the International Code for that care.
- Rooms that were previously approved for children 24 months old and younger will become approved for children 30 months old and younger.

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“We plan to add or add additional children 30 months of age and under to our existing licensed center”

- Previous SC Rules and Regulations required children 24 months old and younger to be kept in a special room (“Infant Room”) to be considered an Educational Occupancy.
- The International Codes require children 30 months (2 ½ years) old and younger to be kept in a special room to be considered an Educational Occupancy. This age group is considered Institutional group (I-4) if the facility does not meet the exceptions listed in the International Building Code.
- Existing Facilities built under previous codes that make no changes may continue to comply with the codes that they were licensed under.
- The next slide applies to new facilities or when changes are made in child care facilities.

“We plan to add or add additional children 30 months of age and under to our existing licensed center” (Cont.)

- The following typically indicates your facility needs to provide special room or rooms for children 30 months (2 ½ yrs) old and younger.
 - New child care facility keeping 6 or more children 30 months old and younger.
 - An existing facility constructs an addition that affects children 30 months old and younger.
 - An existing facility adds more (existing) space for children 30 months old and younger.

“We plan to add or add additional children 30 months of age and under to our existing licensed center” (Cont.)

- ❖ If an existing facility adds space or adds on to the facility to care for children 30 months (2 ½ yrs) old and younger then:
 - All the elements of a proposed room will need to comply with the International Codes.
 - You will need to request a Fire Code verification through your DSS child care licensing specialist prior to beginning work.
 - The DSS Fire & Life Safety inspector may verify whether your facility complies with current code or if you will need an architect.
 - All children 30 months of age and younger at the facility will need to be kept and maintained in an approved room in accordance with International Codes.
 - Rooms that were previously approved for children 24 months old and younger will become approved for children 30 months old and younger.

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“We plan to be a new owner of an existing licensed center”

- Notify your [DSS Child Care Licensing Specialist](#) prior to change.
- Current fire inspection is required within 30 days of change in ownership.
- If there are no changes to the structure or in rooms for children [24 or 30 months old and younger](#); the facility will be treated as existing and will need to comply with the codes enforced at the time the child care facility was last licensed.

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“We plan to be a new owner of a previous licensed center that is closed”

- Click on the statement that best describes your facility:
 - [My building was closed for less than 1 year](#)
 - [My building was closed for 1 year or more](#)
 - [My building was something besides a child care center](#)

“We plan to be a new owner of a previous licensed center that is closed” (cont.)

- My building was closed for less than 1 year-

- Contact your DSS Child Care Licensing Specialist
- You will need a current fire inspection (within 45 days) before licensing.
- If there are no changes to the structure or in the rooms for 24 or 30 months old and younger; the facility will be treated as existing and will need to comply with the codes in force at the time the child care facility was last licensed.

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“We plan to be a new owner of a previous licensed center that is closed” (cont.)

- My building was closed for more than 1 year-

- State law requires that a SC licensed architect prepare plans for the renovations of your facility
 - An architect with child care center experience is suggested (ask for references!)
 - You may verify an architect’s license on “Licensee Lookup”
 - <http://www.llronline.com/>
 - Select “Architects” from the drop down menu
- Questions you need to answer for your Architect:
 - How many children do you plan to keep?
 - Will you keep children 30 months (2 ½ yrs) of age and younger?
 - What are your hours of operation?
 - Will you keep children for 24 hours?
 - Will you have equipment for cooking or warming food? If so what type?

[Continued on next slide](#)

“We plan to be a new owner of a previous licensed center that is closed” (cont.)

- My building was closed for more than 1 year-

- Your architect will need to design the facility to meet current code requirements [as adopted through the SC State Fire Marshal](#).
- SCDSS CCL Fire & Life Safety Office must receive one (1) set of sealed building plans which may include:
 - “As-Built plans” (showing code compliance or needed renovations).
 - A code analysis of the facility for compliance with the currently adopted codes.
- Your architect will need to determine if the fire alarm, hood suppression system, sprinkler system, etc. meets current codes or needs modification. This work is required to be by SC licensed company or permitted person.
- Remaining procedures are the same as [“New Construction”](#).

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“We are planning to relocate our existing licensed or registered center”

- Contact your [DSS Child Care Licensing Specialist](#).
- [Choose an item from the guide list that best describes your situation.](#)
- **Existing Group Child Care Homes** continue to meet the requirements of when they were first licensed. Once the home relocates to a new location, they are required to meet the current requirements as outlined in this guide for an “Educational” child care center.

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“We will be located within an active Public School Building”

- Contact your [DSS Child Care Licensing Specialist](#).
- An “Active” Public School refers to a DSS licensed or proposed licensed facility that is contained within a school building currently in use by and/or maintained by a Public School District or Public School Authority program.
- When required, plans for a licensed child care program, contained within an active public school building, will be examined/reviewed by the SC Department of Education, Office of School Facilities (OSF) for approval.
- Fire inspections for licensed child care programs, contained within an active public school building, will be conducted by [DSS Fire & Life Safety Inspectors](#).
- Click [HERE](#) for a link to the SC Dept. of Education, Office of School Facilities.

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We plan to have a “Group Child Care” in our home.

- Contact your [DSS Child Care Licensing Specialist](#).
- A Group Child Care Home is a child care facility located in the same building that you live in. You can care for 6 to 12 children only.
- It is considered a Group E (Educational) Occupancy, the same as a [Child Care Center](#).
- Placing an Educational Occupancy in One and Two Family homes, built using a Residential Code, is a change of occupancy for the structure. (Mixed Occupancy per the International Building Code)
- The International Building and International Fire Code requires a building with a Residential Occupancy (the home you live in and the child care) to be equipped with an automatic sprinkler system throughout, unless separated by a true fire wall in accordance with the International Building Code.
- The Sprinkler System is required to be installed in accordance with NFPA 13.

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General Information

“Plan Examination Process”

- State law requires that a SC licensed architect prepare plans for your facility
 - You may verify an architect’s license on “Licensee Lookup”
 - <http://www.llronline.com/>
 - Select “Architects” from the drop down menu
- One copy of the plans are to be sent to:
 - DSS Child Care Licensing
 - Fire & Life Safety
 - 2638 Two Notch Rd., Suite 217
 - Columbia, SC 29204.

General Information

“Plan Examination Process”

- Once received, plans are logged in and are examined in the order received.
- Initial examinations may take as long as 30 days.
- The architect, DSS Fire & Life Safety inspector, the DSS licensing regional office, and local fire official when known, will receive electronic copies of the Examination Report.
- The child care center may not be permitted to open until the plans are approved and all follow-up inspections are completed.

General Information

“Plan Examination Process”

- The plans are examined by DSS Fire & Life Safety staff.
- Fire Plan Examination Report will be developed.
 - If there is a question or concern with the plans, the report may state “Not Approved”.
 - If there are no questions or concerns the report may state “Approved”.
 - If there are items that need clarification, the report may state “Conditionally Approved”.

General Information

“Plan Examination Process”

If the report states “Not Approved”

- The architect must revise the plans based on the examination report.
- Revised plans along with response letter from the architect is re-submitted to DSS. Some conditions only require a response letter.
- Revised plans must be re-examined:
 - Plans are examined based on the date received.
 - Stay on top of your architect so they resubmit plans or send comment response promptly.
 - Be sure the resubmitted plans have a response letter to the DSS Fire & Life Safety office.
 - The child care center may not be permitted to open until plans are approved and all follow-up inspections are complete.

General Information

“Plan Examination Process”

If the report states “Approved”

- When plans are approved, corrections to or work on the building may begin so building meets the approved plans.
- DSS and Local inspectors will need to be contacted for any acceptance tests, for example: fire alarm, hood extinguishing system, sprinklers, etc...
- Contact DSS Fire & Life Safety inspector when all work is completed for final inspection.
 - DSS 2905 [“DHEC – Fire Inspection Request” form](#) is required to be submitted to DSS Licensing before inspections can be conducted.
 - DSS Fire Inspector will verify the building meets approved plans.
 - When the building is verified to have met the requirements, by the DSS Fire & Life Safety Inspector; a clear fire report will be issued and this will complete the Fire Code requirements for the building.

General Information

“Plan Examination Process”

If the report states “Conditionally Approved”

- When plans are conditionally approved, corrections to or work on the building may begin so building meets the plans. A copy of the “Conditionally Approved” Report will need to be maintained on site so contractor and inspectors may verify conditional items are followed.
- DSS and Local inspectors will need to be contacted for any acceptance tests, for example: fire alarm, hood extinguishing system, sprinklers, etc...
- Contact DSS Fire & Life Safety inspector when all work is completed for a final inspection.
 - DSS 2905 [“DHEC – Fire Inspection Request” form](#) is required to be submitted to DSS Licensing before inspections can be conducted.
 - DSS Fire Inspector will verify the building meets approved plans.
 - When the building is verified to have met the requirements, by the DSS Fire & Life Safety Inspector; a clear fire report will be issued and this will complete the Fire Code requirements for the building.

General Information

“Construction or Renovations”

- Remember to apply for local permits!
- Start building or remodeling after plans are approved
 - If you build before having approved plans, you build at your own risk!
 - Starting construction before plans are approved may delay the process and be costly to you.
- Continue working with DSS- Child Care Licensing on completing your licensing packet
- Near completion
 - Contact [DSS Fire & Life Safety](#) inspector to arrange for a joint inspection that includes the local jurisdiction to complete the joint acceptance tests.
 - DSS 2905 [“DHEC – Fire Inspection Request” form](#) is required to be submitted to DSS Licensing before inspections can be conducted.

General Information

“Before the Inspector Arrives”

- Have copies of all test certificates, approval letters, and approved drawings
 - Fire Alarm & Sprinkler System (if applicable)
 - Note that Sprinkler approval letters for aboveground and underground installation are required to be from the Office of State Fire Marshal.
 - Interior furnishing (carpeting, draperies, etc)
 - Hood System Inspection report
- For new or modified fire alarm systems
 - Arrange for the fire alarm contractor to be present the day of your inspection for acceptance testing
- Have keys to open all spaces in the facility

General Information

“Inspection Day”

- The DSS Inspector will:
 - Inspect your facility
 - Review all test reports and documents
 - Witness acceptance tests (Alarm, Sprinkler, Hood, Etc.)
 - Review findings
 - Print and leave a copy of the report at the facility
- If a re-inspection is needed
 - Contact the inspector once the corrections are completed
- Reports are sent to the DSS Child Care Licensing regional office.
- Do not begin providing child care until you have been issued a license by DSS Child Care Licensing.

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All other situations

- I have a question concerning DSS licensing:
 - Increasing the number children on your license
 - To schedule a fire inspection

[\(click here\)](#)
 - I have a question about the fire codes
- [\(click here\)](#)

SC DSS Child Care Licensing

- Central Office -----Toll-Free: 800-556-7445
Main: 803-898-9020
FAX: 803-898-9029
- Region I – Greenville-----Toll-Free: 800-637-8550
Main: 864-250-5567
FAX: 864-250-8044
- Region II – Columbia-----Toll-Free: 888-202-1469
Main: 803-898-9001
FAX: 803-898-9002
- Region III- Charleston-----Toll-Free: 800-260-0211
Main: 843-953-9780
FAX: 843-953-9787
- Region IV – Florence-----Toll-Free: 800-464-9138
Main: 843-661-6623
FAX: 843-661-7504

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Fire Code Questions

- Contact SCDSS CCL Fire & Life Safety Office @ (803) 898-9020 or 800-556-7445
 - You may ask for a Fire & Life Safety Inspector for fire code questions.
 - Click the link below to view the State Fire Marshal's web site
 - <http://scfiremarshal.llronline.com/>
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