

Inspection Readiness Checklist

Walk your center like a licensor would, before they ever arrive.

Here is what I learned in 17 years of licensing visits: the centers that stay calm on inspection day are the ones that stay ready every day. This is a general, national checklist you can use in any state to spot the gaps before an inspector does. It is not a substitute for your state's rules. Requirements, ratios, and forms vary by state, so always confirm the specifics with your state licensing agency. Print it, walk your building, and check each box honestly.

1. Licensing and Records

- ☐ Current license is posted where families and inspectors can see it.
- ☐ License matches your actual capacity, ages served, and hours.
- ☐ Required policies and procedures are written, current, and on file.
- ☐ Attendance records are accurate and up to date for every day.
- ☐ Prior inspection reports and any corrective actions are documented and resolved.

2. Child Files and Enrollment

- ☐ Every enrolled child has a complete file before their first day.
- ☐ Emergency contact and authorized-pickup information is current for each child.
- ☐ Immunization and health records meet your state's requirements.
- ☐ Signed permissions are on file (photos, field trips, transportation, emergency care).
- ☐ Allergy, medication, custody, and special-care information is documented and known to staff.

3. Staff Records and Qualifications

- ☐ Background checks are complete and current for every staff member.
- ☐ CPR and First Aid certifications are current and not expired.
- ☐ Required training hours are complete and documented for each employee.
- ☐ Every staff file includes orientation, qualifications, and required health documents.
- ☐ Staff schedules show qualified coverage during all operating hours.

4. Ratios and Supervision

- ☐ Current ratio and group-size requirements are posted in each classroom.
- ☐ Ratios are held at all times, including breaks, openings, closings, and transitions.
- ☐ Children are supervised by sight and sound at all times.
- ☐ Sign-in and sign-out records are complete and accurate.
- ☐ A plan is in place to hold ratio when a staff member is out.

5. Health and Safety

- ☐ Medications are stored correctly, labeled, and logged with signed authorizations.
- ☐ First aid kits are stocked, accessible, and not expired.
- ☐ Handwashing, diapering, and sanitizing procedures are followed and posted where required.
- ☐ Safe sleep practices are followed for infants, with cribs meeting current standards.
- ☐ Cleaning supplies and hazardous materials are locked and out of children's reach.
- ☐ Allergy plans are posted where staff serve or supervise food, without violating privacy.

6. Facility and Environment

- ☐ The building is clean, in good repair, and free of visible hazards.
- ☐ Entry is secure and access is controlled during operating hours.
- ☐ Furniture, equipment, and toys are safe, clean, and age-appropriate.
- ☐ Outdoor play areas are safe, fenced, and free of hazards, with surfacing in good condition.
- ☐ Water temperature, lighting, and ventilation meet safe, comfortable levels.

7. Emergency Preparedness

- ☐ Evacuation routes and emergency procedures are posted in every room.
- ☐ Fire, weather, and lockdown drills are practiced and documented on schedule.
- ☐ Emergency contact information and parent notification plans are current.
- ☐ Emergency supplies (first aid, water, flashlights) are stocked and accessible.
- ☐ Incident and injury reports are documented and shared with families as required.

8. Nutrition, Transportation, and Postings

- ☐ Menus are posted and food is stored, prepared, and served safely.
- ☐ If you participate in a food program, its records and requirements are current.
- ☐ If you transport children: driver records, vehicle checks, restraints, and ratios are documented.
- ☐ All required notices and licenses are posted and visible.
- ☐ Daily records (attendance, meals, incidents) are complete and available on request.

BEFORE THE INSPECTOR ARRIVES

Do a full walk-through using this list at least once a month, not just before a visit. Fix the small things while they are small. Preparation, not panic, is the whole game. And remember: this is a general guide. Your state sets the exact rules, so verify anything you are unsure about with your state childcare licensing agency.