

RULE GUIDANCE

Group Size Separation

LICENSE TYPE AND RULES

Certified Child Care Center (CC)

OAR 414-300-0130 (1) and OAR 414-300-0140 (3)

Certified School-age Center (SC)

OAR 414-310-0240 (3); OAR 414-310-0360 (4); OAR 414-310-0360 (5) and OAR 414-310-0440 (5)(a)(A)



WHY THESE RULES ARE IN PLACE

Many research studies have shown that low child-to-staff ratios and group sizes have a positive impact on the overall quality of early and school-age care programs and children's experiences in those programs. For example:

- Lower child-to-staff ratios are associated with fewer situations involving potential danger (such as children leaving a child care space or accessing hazardous items or spaces).
- Children in smaller groups are more cooperative and exhibit more social competence than children in larger groups.

Office of Child Care (OCC) rules limit the number of children that can be in a group at the same time. However, in large spaces such as gyms or cafeterias, it is not always practical to physically separate children into required group sizes.

OCC rules allow furniture to be used when group separation is necessary. This could be portable or permanent room dividers, a bookcase or shelf, or pieces of program equipment that stand above the eye level of the children who use the area.

HOW THIS MAY LOOK IN YOUR PROGRAM

- Group size for school-age children is not strictly enforced, as long as there are some separate interest areas that allow children to break out into smaller groups and engage in various activities. Physical barriers are not required to define separate interest areas for school-age children.
- Children of any age may come together in a large group for outdoor play, during field trips, planned large group activities, napping, and eating. However, ratios must be established based on the youngest child in the group at any given time.
- One attendance sheet can cover the entire large group. When the large group is broken up (e.g., some children go outside or to a different room), separate accurate attendance records must be taken by each group. These attendance records must list staff and children in order to verify required child-to-staff ratios are maintained at all times.
- A center must maintain the current day's attendance record in paper or electronic format with each group of children.

OCC LICENSING SPECIALIST MAY REVIEW

- Attendance records for staff and children
- Interest areas set up for school-age children in attendance
- Both sides of the room that are set up as two individual classrooms when children attending are younger than school age

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

When more than one group of children use the same space at one time, OCC rules allow furniture to be used to separate and divide the groups. As long as the space has adequate square footage, furniture can be used to divide the space in order to accommodate multiple groups of children.

When children attending are preschool-age or younger:

- Each space is considered separate and operates as an independent classroom.
- Each space must have its own staff, children, program materials, and attendance records.
- Children younger than school age may not move freely between the spaces. A child may briefly go to the other side to get something as long as they immediately return to their designated space.
- Staff may not be counted in ratio for more than one space or classroom at a time, even if they are able to visually supervise both spaces.
- Children may come together in a large group for outdoor play, during field trips, planned large group activities, napping, and eating.
- All OCC ratio requirements apply.

When children attending are all school-age:

- Separate interest areas should be arranged to avoid a large group.
- One attendance record may be used for the entire group.
- The entire group may come together for planned group activities, outside play, and snack time.
- All OCC ratio requirements apply.

SUGGESTIONS FOR SCHOOL-AGE PROGRAMS LARGE GROUP MANAGEMENT

- Color coordinate for different groups with tags, clothing, or rubber bracelets, clearly identifying a specific group of children.
- Use masking tape on the floor to define interest areas.
- In a large group, separate children by ages and provide age-appropriate activities.
- Divide groups into different interest areas, allowing only a certain number of children at each interest area.
- Divide large spaces into multiple use zones.
 - A soft space with rugs, pillows, or bean bag chairs for activities such as reading, homework, or quiet time.
 - A gross motor area such as a dance space, basketball-playing area, or an obstacle course.
- Discuss the noise level and how it can be managed based on the activities chosen for the day.

OPTIONAL RESOURCES

<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/>

Oregon Administrative Rules, Oregon Department of Education, Early Learning Division, Chapter 414, Division 300 [Certified Child Care Centers](#) and Division 310 [Certified School-Age Child Care Centers](#).

Original Issue Date: Sept 2021

Updated: Feb 2023
