

Starting a Daycare in Ontario: Your Comprehensive Guide & Checklist

Provided by [KinderPage](#), the most comprehensive childcare directory in Canada.

Ontario Daycare Start-Up Checklist

1. Market Research & Feasibility

- **Identify Target Demographics:** Consider age groups (infants, toddlers, preschoolers) and the specific needs of your community (e.g., extended hours, bilingual programs).
- **Analyze Local Competition:** Visit nearby daycares or research their offerings, prices, and capacity. Identify service gaps (e.g., special needs programs, overnight care).
- **Assess Demand & Waitlists:** Determine if there's a waitlist in the area for certain age groups or specialized programs.
- **Choose Location Strategically:** Investigate zoning bylaws, local family demographics, nearby schools or workplaces, and public transit access.

2. Business Structure & Registration

- **Decide on a Business Entity:** Sole proprietorship, partnership, or incorporation. (Tip: Many providers opt to incorporate for liability protection.)
- **Register Your Business Name:** Register with the Ontario government if operating under a name other than your own.
- **Obtain a Business Number (BN):** Required for tax, payroll, and other federal accounts.
- **Open a Business Bank Account:** Keep personal and daycare finances separate.

3. Licensing & Regulatory Compliance

- **Understand License Requirements:** In Ontario, caring for more than five children (under age 13) requires a license (unless you're exempt). Home-based care with five or fewer children must still follow Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA) rules for unlicensed care.
- **Review Ministry Resources:** Familiarize yourself with the **Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014** and the Ministry of Education's licensing guidelines (Child Care Licensing System, or CCLS).
- **Site Inspection & Approvals:**
 - **Building and Fire Codes:** Ensure your space meets local municipal zoning, building codes, and fire safety regulations.
 - **Health Regulations:** Contact your local Public Health unit for guidelines on food handling, sanitation, and immunization requirements.
- **Compile Required Documentation:**
 - Floor plans and property details
 - Policies and procedures (health & safety, emergency management, daily programming, behavior guidance, etc.)
 - Staff qualifications, first-aid training, police record checks including vulnerable sector screening

- Insurance coverage (general liability, property, possibly professional liability)
- **Submit Application in CCLS:** Complete your online application, attach required documents, and pay fees. **Plan for 4–6 months** before your intended opening.

4. Facility Setup

- **Layout & Furnishings:** Ensure age-appropriate space, natural lighting, safe indoor/outdoor play areas, child-sized furniture, and secure entries/exits.
- **Outdoor Play Area:** Comply with fencing, playground surface guidelines, and daily inspection for hazards.
- **Safety & Accessibility Features:**
 - Childproof locks, outlet covers, gates
 - Fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, carbon monoxide detectors
 - Wheelchair ramps and other accessibility features, if required
- **Equipment & Supplies:**
 - Educational toys, books, art supplies
 - Sleeping mats/cribs (for infants, toddlers)
 - Cleaning materials stored securely
 - First-aid kits, PPE if needed

5. Curriculum & Program Development

- **Define an Educational Philosophy:** Play-based, Montessori-inspired, bilingual, STEM-focused—align it with market gaps and your passion.
- **Daily Schedule:** Break down hours for free play, structured learning, outdoor time, meals, and naps.
- **Age-Specific Programming:** Infants, toddlers, preschoolers—tailor developmental activities to each group.
- **Cultural & Community Integration:** Consider multicultural events, language programs, or partnerships with local organizations.

6. Staffing & Human Resources

- **Determine Staff-to-Child Ratios:** Follow CCEYA guidelines for each age group (e.g., 1:3 for infants, 1:8 for preschoolers, etc.).
- **Hire Qualified ECEs:** Early Childhood Educators (ECEs) must be registered with the College of Early Childhood Educators.
- **Obtain Police Record Checks:** Vulnerable sector screenings for all staff and volunteers.
- **Provide Ongoing Professional Development:** Keep staff updated on CPR/First Aid, behavior management, and current pedagogical practices.
- **Establish HR Policies:** Include hiring practices, code of conduct, performance evaluations, and staff retention initiatives.

7. Policies, Procedures & Documentation

- **Written Policies & Parent Handbook:** Cover health & safety, emergency procedures, code of conduct, confidentiality, and enrollment policies.
- **Enrollment Forms & Contracts:** Gather child info, immunization records, emergency contacts, pickup authorizations.
- **Health & Safety Protocols:**
 - Handwashing and hygiene practices

- Illness and communicable disease policies
- Medication administration procedures
- **Incident Reporting & Record-Keeping:** Document accidents or injuries, track attendance, keep logs of staff hours, and maintain up-to-date children's records.

8. Financial Planning

- **Startup Budget:** Account for renovations, equipment, first-month payroll, licensing fees, and insurance.
- **Ongoing Operating Costs:** Salaries, rent/mortgage, utilities, food, program materials, software, marketing.
- **Set Tuition & Fee Structures:** Evaluate local competitors, staff costs, and overhead. Consider offering tiered or part-time rates.
- **Explore Funding & Grants:** General Operating Grant, Wage Enhancement Grant, childcare fee subsidies, Canada-Wide Early Learning & Child Care (CWELCC) system.
- **Keep Reserve Funds:** Aim for **3–6 months** of operating expenses in reserve.

9. Insurance & Legal Considerations

- **General Liability & Commercial Property Insurance:** Often required for licensing.
- **Professional Liability:** Protects against negligence claims.
- **Accident/Medical Coverage:** For staff and children, if desired.
- **Contracts & Waivers:** Have a lawyer review parent contracts, staff agreements, and policy manuals.

10. Marketing & Enrollment

- **Digital Presence:**
 - Create a website or listing on a childcare directory platform (e.g., KinderPage.ca).
 - Use social media (Facebook, Instagram) to share photos, daily activities, and testimonials.
- **Community Outreach:** Participate in local family events, sponsor community activities, partner with pediatricians and local businesses.
- **Parent Testimonials & Referrals:** Encourage satisfied families to spread the word. Post positive reviews on your site or social media.
- **Open House Events:** Invite families to tour your facility, meet staff, and see your program in action.

11. Day One Readiness

- **Final Inspection & Compliance Check:** Ensure no licensing requirements are overlooked.
- **Staff Training & Orientation:** Review emergency procedures, confidentiality requirements, and daily routines.
- **Classroom Setup:** Label cubbies, prepare schedules, stock supplies.
- **Parental Communication:** Email or call enrolled parents with final updates on start date, daily routine, and any last-minute reminders.

12. Ongoing Management & Growth

- **Regularly Review Licensing Requirements:** Stay updated on changes to the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014.

- **Continuous Quality Improvement:** Gather parent feedback, conduct staff self-assessments, monitor child development outcomes.
- **Professional Development:** Encourage advanced qualifications for staff, leadership training, specialized certifications.
- **Financial Monitoring:** Track monthly revenue and expenses, adjust fees or enrollment strategies as needed.
- **Plan for Expansion or Upgrades:** Explore adding additional programs (e.g., after-school care, holiday camps) once stable.

Additional Resources

- **Ontario Ministry of Education:** [Child Care Licensing Resources](#)
- **College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE):** [Standards & Membership](#)
- **Local Public Health Units:** For region-specific health and safety guidelines
- **Small Business Enterprise Centres in Ontario:** For guidance on business registration, financing, and marketing

Bonus Tip: Boost Your Daycare's Visibility with KinderPage

Did you know you can claim a dedicated page for your daycare on [KinderPage](#)? KinderPage is a rapidly growing platform designed to connect families with quality childcare providers across Canada. By claiming your page, you can:

- **Showcase Your Unique Offerings:** Upload photos, detail your programs, and highlight what sets your daycare apart.
- **Streamline Communication:** Provide clear contact details so parents can easily reach you with inquiries or schedule tours.
- **Build Credibility:** Share testimonials and reviews, helping parents feel confident about choosing your daycare.
- **Save Time & Money on Marketing:** Reduce the need for expensive ads—KinderPage increases your online visibility, putting you front and center for families actively seeking care.

Don't miss out on this opportunity to connect with local families and fill your enrollment slots faster. [Claim Your Free Page on KinderPage Today](#)

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