

Child Care Centre Design Guidelines Early Learning and Child Care Division

INTRODUCTION

This document is intended to be a summary of information related to the design of best practice child care environments, for use by individuals involved in planning and developing child care facilities in Manitoba. As such, this is a guide of key considerations yet, there may be other considerations that need to be taken into account when planning and developing a facility. Those involved may include, but not be limited to: boards of directors, early childhood educators, architectural design teams, and Child Care Coordinators.

All licensed child care programs in the Province of Manitoba, including full time centres, school age child care centres and nursery schools, are governed by The Community Child Care Standards Act (the Act) and Manitoba Regulation 62/86. These regulations are referenced within this document and can be found at:

<https://www.manitoba.ca/education/childcare/> under Resources > Publications.

When choosing a child care facility location, it is essential that the sponsoring group ensure that it can receive zoning and an occupancy permit and can meet all requirements for licensing under the Act and regulations, Public Health and the Manitoba Fire Code.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

1. **Overall Space:** It is recommended that the overall amount of facility space is based on 88 square feet per licensed child space. Best practice recommends 3.7 to 4.6m² (39.8 to 49.5 square feet) per child of floor space be free and useable for play activities. Regulations require that a minimum of 3.3m² (35.5 square feet) per child of floor space be free and useable for play activities. Refer to Manitoba Regulation 62/86, Section 9(1) and 9(1.3).

The remaining space must accommodate office, kitchen/food preparation area(s), washrooms, staff room, staff washroom, children's locker area, storage, wall thickness and other areas not used for play. In addition, it must accommodate space required for equipment or furniture used for the napping, feeding or toileting of infants if the space is to be licensed for infants.

2. **Group Size per Room:** It is required that a wall or floor to ceiling partition must be provided when more than 16 infants or 32 preschool children are cared for in one area. For an area to be considered a room there must be a full height sound barrier, such as a wall, folding or sliding partitions. It is best practice to accommodate smaller group sizes in a divided space. For example: 2 rooms for 8 infants each rather than 1 room for 16 infants or 2 rooms for 16 preschool children each rather than one room for 32 preschool children. If four infants are not accommodated in a separate enclosed space, a written plan must be submitted describing how the children's developmental needs will be met. Ideally, infants will be cared for in a separate area from preschool children. Refer to Manitoba Regulation 62/86, Sections 8(2), 8(3) and 8(5) for specific information on the maximum number of licensed spaces permitted per room.
3. **Emergency Systems:** It is required that a fire alarm system, emergency lighting system, and other fire safety equipment may be required. Based on the type of care being offered, the number of children being cared for, and the location of the centre, the appropriate Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) should be consulted, and any requirements noted must be included prior to opening
4. **Washroom Facilities:** It is required that 1 toilet and 1 sink be provided for every 10 licensed spaces. Refer to Manitoba Regulation 62/86, Section 12(10). It is recommended that these fixtures are child size and mounted at child height for independent use. One sink should be provided in the play area for general hand washing, while there must be at least one sink provided for every two toilets. This sink (or sinks) in the washroom area should strictly be used for toileting/diapering.

Note: National Building Code requires a minimum of one wheelchair accessible washroom in the building.

Access to Natural Light: Regulations require that all full-time child care centres provide a minimum of one room with natural light that all children will have access to, for their activities each day. Refer to Manitoba Regulation 62/86, Section 9(1.1). It is preferable that each playroom have windows, that some windows are operable, and for windows to be installed low enough for the children to see outside without obstruction (bottom sill approximately 18 inches to 2 feet off the floor), in both infant and preschool areas. Best practice is to provide as much natural light in each room as possible.

CHILDREN'S SPACE AND LAYOUT

Note: Group size is defined in Manitoba Regulation 62/86, Sections 8(2), 8(3), and 8(4).

1. While regulations state that the maximum number of infants in one room is 16 and preschool children is 32, it is best practice to design two rooms for 8 infants in each or 2 rooms for 16 preschool children in each.
2. The layout of the room should not create any hidden corners and L-shaped spaces should be avoided to facilitate proper supervision.
3. Ideally, all child care spaces should be located in a ground level floor space with direct access to the exterior. This is especially important for infants to facilitate evacuation in an emergency and to simplify daily routines and access to the outdoors.
4. The designated nap area should be situated away from highly active and noisy activity (for example, kitchen, laundry, entrance) and should accommodate no more than two groups of children.
5. A nap area within the playroom is **strongly recommended** as opposed to a separate and dedicated nap room. This is to enable direct supervision. The nap space can be combined with a quiet play area with low, movable shelving used to separate quiet play from sleeping children. The sleeping area must allow 2.3m² (24.8 square feet) per child while they are sleeping. Refer to Manitoba Regulation 62/86, Section 9(2). This should be in addition to the useable play space requirements. Cots, cribs or playpens must be 915mm (36 inches) apart, unless the crib has clear plexi-glass end panels to maintain visibility and prevent the spread of airborne infection. The layout must also ensure that caregivers have no difficulty accessing children because cots/cribs/or playpens are too close to one another.
6. Building Occupancy-Child care centres may fall under one of 2 occupancy categories. A2 is assembly occupancy, and B3 is institutional occupancy. Based on the type of care being offered, the number of children being cared for, and the location of the centre, the appropriate Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) should be consulted to determine the occupancy category, and any associated building requirements. The AHJ is determined by the geographic location of the building in Manitoba and will determine if the building must comply with part 9 or part 3 of the Manitoba Building Code. Occupancy permits are required prior to occupancy of any newly constructed, renovated, or repaired building and where a building permit has been issued. For questions about how the Manitoba Building and Fire Codes apply to your project, please contact:

Inspection and Technical Services
 508-401 York Avenue
 Winnipeg, MB R3C 0P8
 Telephone: 1-204-945-3373
 Email: TechnicalServices@gov.mb.ca

WASHROOMS AND DIAPERING

1. The washroom area should be directly accessible from the play space, include 1 toilet and 1 sink for every 10 children for full time child care centres and nursery schools. School-age centres must include 1 toilet and 1 sink for every 15 children. Refer to Manitoba Regulation 62/86, Section 12(10). To facilitate children's independence, the fixtures should be child-sized and the toilet should have a lid. Mirrors over sinks in the washroom area are an asset. Single use paper towel dispensers and soap dispensers are required at child height.
2. Sink heights should be at 500 to 560mm (20 to 22 inches) for infants and at 560 to 600mm (22 to 24 inches) for preschool children. Sinks should also be mounted toward the front edge of a 450 to 500mm (18 to 20 inch) deep counter. The sink in washroom area should be specific to toileting related hand washing. A separate sink in the play space to be used for all other general hand washing is recommended. Hands free faucets are also recommended to prevent the spread of germs.
3. Child size toilet seat height is approximately 250 to 300mm (10 to 12 inches). Low partitions and doors, approximately 1020 to 1070mm (40 to 42 inches) in height, should enclose toilet stalls to provide child privacy from their peers but still allow adult supervision.
4. The diaper changing area should be close to the washroom to facilitate waste disposal and should contain an adult height sink for hand washing and a toilet to enable direct waste disposal. By incorporating a large deep sink for staff hand washing, it may also act as a fixed sink and bathing area for infants. This should be incorporated and located directly next to the change surface. Refer to Manitoba Regulation 62/86, Section 12(10.2). The diapering surface should be made of smooth, non-porous, moisture resistant, easily cleanable material. A physical separation between the diapering area and all food, play or sleeping areas will reduce the chance of spreading germs.
5. The diaper area should be oriented to face the play space to allow staff to visually supervise the other children while changing a diaper. Hands-free taps at the sink are recommended in the diaper change area. The diaper change surface should be approximately 71 to 81 cm (28 to 32 inches) in height plus a 150 mm (6 inch) high guard along the outside edge of the diapering counter for safety. Length of the change surface should be 900 to 1200mm (36 to 48 inches) with a separate area from the change mat, but within arms reach to set out diapering supplies. Pull-out steps are recommended to allow staff to help children climb up and prevent back injury caused by lifting. Children must never be left unattended.
6. Wall cubicles within easy reach above the diapering counter are recommended for storage of diapers and personal items. One cubicle approximately 30 by 30 cm (12 by 12 inches) per child is recommended.

7. Lockable cupboards and a foot operated waste disposal unit should be provided below the diapering counter and out of reach of children.
8. In school age programs, separate washroom facilities for boys and girls with private toilet stalls should be provided. In addition to toilets, urinals are appropriate for school age children only. Where 3 or more toilets are required, 1/3 of toilets may be urinals. Refer to Manitoba Regulation 62/86, Section 12(14).

STORAGE

1. Shelving units containing materials for the children's use will only be included in the calculation of useable play space to a maximum of 20% of the floor space. Any fixed equipment beyond this will be deducted from the useable floor space calculation to determine licensed spaces. Refer to Manitoba Regulation 62/86, Section 9(1).
2. Lockers should be provided within the play space to allow children independent access to their belongings. The locker footprint cannot be included as part of minimum play space requirements.
3. Best practice is to provide individual lockers for storage of children's personal belongings and clothing. Hooks should be provided on both sides of the lockers. The hooks should be approximately 1070 to 1200mm (42 to 48 inches) from the floor level. The width of the locker should be approximately 300 to 350mm (12 to 14 inches).
4. Staff require a closet or hooks to store outerwear within the play space and individual, lockable storage for personal belongings.
5. Consider space for a closed storage area for cots or mats near the preschool napping area.
6. Wall-mounted closed storage above floor level must be well secured and should be provided wherever possible to avoid taking up valuable play space.
7. A separate lockable cupboard must be provided for cleaning and hazardous products.
8. A separate room(s) with ample space for storage of toys, equipment and materials that are rotated through the program.
9. An estimate of storage requirements can be based on 10% of the net building square footage.
10. Storage for outdoor equipment should be located either near the centre exit to the outdoor play area or in an outdoor shed next to the play area.

FOOD PREPARATION

1. Provide space for a food preparation area with a dedicated-use adult height sink and/or a food-serving counter. This area should be located separate from the washrooms and diaper change area.
2. Space for a refrigerator should be available in infant areas, along with a microwave shelf incorporated above the serving counter.

ENTRY, ACCESS AND SECURITY

1. The entrance to the child care centre should be accessible for safe and convenient drop-off and pick-up of children. There should be a fence and/or other barrier between centre exits and vehicular traffic.
2. Access to the centre must be controlled at all times. At minimum, all doors to the centre must be locked to prevent unmonitored entry. The main entry must have a system in place that allows staff to verbally or visually confirm the identity of visitors before providing entry. Examples include: a door with a bell and a window or peep hole; or an audio or video intercom system with a staff-controlled remote door release. To facilitate parent and staff access, a coded or card access system is an additional measure that could be considered.
3. All locked doors must be easily opened from the inside without the use of keys, special devices or specialized knowledge.
4. All door hardware should meet accessibility requirements, be easily operated with limited hand mobility, but should also be out of reach for children's operation, to a maximum of 4 feet from floor.
5. An audible signal can be included to alert staff to play space door opening.

OUTSIDE PLAYSACE

1. An outdoor play area large enough to provide 75 square feet (7m²) per child for a minimum of ½ of the total licensed spaces at one time is required by Regulation. Refer to Manitoba Regulation 62/86, Section 9(3). This area, if owned or rented by the child care centre, must be fenced and 50% of the area must be grass, sand or a similar surface. It is desirable to provide 9.3 to 13.9 m² (100 to 150 square feet) of outdoor space per child enrolled in the centre to move towards best practices.
2. Best practice is also to provide direct access from the inside play space to an immediately adjacent outdoor play space.
3. If the outdoor area is close to a parking lot or busy street cement barriers or bollards in addition to a fence should be in place as extra protection
4. All outdoor play space development must meet CSA standards.
5. Natural play space development that connects children with nature is highly recommended.

ADULT USE – SUPPORT SPACES

Central Kitchen

1. Public Health requires that the kitchen meet the code for an institutional food preparation area, including seamless flooring, epoxy wall paint, and a ceiling with a smooth washable finish (no perforated ceiling tiles).
2. The kitchen should be adjacent to both the preschool and the infant areas but access must be controlled by a door. A Dutch door could be considered to improve communication and airflow.
3. Space in the kitchen should allow for a refrigerator, freezer, stove with proper ventilation and commercial dishwasher (or a triple sink).
4. Separate food preparation and hand washing sinks are required.
5. A microwave is recommended to be included in the kitchen.

Laundry

Laundry facilities should be provided, preferably accessible to the infant area. Laundry facilities should not be located within (or accessed through) the kitchen space to protect from cross contamination of surfaces.

Office, Administration and Staff Space

1. The office area should be close to the child care centre entrance and be fully enclosed for privacy.
2. It is preferable to include windows from the office into the entrance and play areas.
3. One-way glass from the office could be provided for observation purposes.
4. Locked storage is required for personal information.
5. Ideally, a staff computer and photocopier will be in a common workspace that staff can also use to prepare program materials. The fax machine and printer should be in a secure area to protect confidentiality.
6. A comfortable staff room should be provided for staff lunches and breaks.
7. A staff washroom is required and is often designed as a wheelchair accessible washroom.

DESIGN DETAILS

Flooring and Finishes

1. A balance of 30% resilient flooring and 70% carpet within the play area floor space is recommended. This can be accomplished with area carpets on resilient flooring to allow flexibility with room arrangement and enable thorough cleaning. All area carpets must be secured and have non-slip backing.
2. Commercial grade finishes and hardware are recommended throughout.
3. Avoid the use of primary colours or overuse of strong colour schemes on walls, floors or furniture.
4. A bulletin board should be installed for parent information.
5. Baseboard mouldings should be applied in continuous strips, even at corners, where possible.
6. Acoustic ceiling tiles are recommended as a means to help control sound and open joists should be treated with sound absorbing material and/or sound absorbing panels installed throughout centre.

Lighting

1. Proper zoning of lights and separate control switches allow staff to dim lighting in areas of the play space used for napping.
2. General lighting, as required by Public Health, should be at 500 lux and all light fixtures must be covered with lenses.
3. Natural light should be able to be controlled with window coverings. Rollers shades with child safe controls are recommended.
4. A schedule may be required to show how all children will have access to natural light, if any program rooms do not have windows.

Windows

1. Interior windows should be used wherever suitable to create a feeling of openness and bring natural light into interior spaces. Some examples are: at a door to the infant area at the child's height; and in fixed walls to facilitate supervision, staff communication and children's interaction.
2. Window seats are an asset. These seats should be well padded especially in the infant room.

3. Windows should have low sills, frame interesting views and be operable for fresh air.

Air Quality

1. Acceptable indoor air quality is calculated based on actual occupant load and area of the space (refer to the latest edition of ANSI/ ASHRAE Standard 62 – Ventilation for Acceptable Indoor Air Quality). A professional engineer must certify in writing that these requirements have been incorporated in the H.V.A.C. system for this occupancy.
2. An exhaust fan should be provided in diaper change and toileting areas.
3. At least some of the exterior windows should open for ventilation. Operable windows must have screens as well as limiting hardware to prevent the window opening beyond 100mm (4 inches) as a safety precaution.

Electrical

1. Electrical outlets must be according to code and out of reach of children. Safety receptacles are required where outlets are accessible to children.
2. Electrical outlets should be considered above counter height to avoid dangling cords.
3. Telephone connections should be available in the office, staff area and play space. An internal intercom system is beneficial.

If you have any questions about these guidelines, contact your Child Care Coordinator or:

Child Care Information Services

Telephone: 204-945-0776

Toll-Free: 1-888-213-4754

Email: cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca

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