



**Department of
Early Education and Care**
THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

Large Group and School Age Child Care Licensing

POLICY STATEMENT: Staff Ratios and Groupings

Child care licensing regulations define “group” as follows: Two or more children who participate in the same activities at the same time and are assigned to the same staff person for supervision, at the same time.

The number of children any classroom can accommodate is determined by the activity space, the staffing pattern, and the available materials and equipment. The Department recommends (but does not require) that only one group of children be assigned to each classroom. However, if more than one group of children shares the same classroom, the room must be divided into areas of sufficient activity space for each group by partitions, storage units or other physical barriers.

If a program wishes to exceed the maximum groupings, the program must submit a plan to assure that the intent of the EEC’s group sizes is met by assigning primary caregivers to promote the continuity of care and to ensure the health, safety, supervision, growth, and development of each child. This plan may be submitted to EEC for statewide review and approval. EEC licensing staff will monitor this alternative plan to ensure compliance. Additional restrictions may be required if the program fails to comply with these provisions.

During circle time, two groups of children may be combined for a brief time provided that staff participate in the activity together with the children and that the activity is appropriate for combined groups (for example, singing or presenting the day's activities). If circle time exceeds 15 minutes or if the activity is not appropriate for a combined group, the groups may not be combined.

The required groupings may be exceeded on the playground as a whole if there is sufficient square footage. Programs must maintain the health and safety of all the children relative to their ages and developmental stages.