



# Systems Guide for Maintaining Staff/Child Ratios and Supervision

Rule 5101:2-12-20: Staff/Child Ratios and Supervision

*"It is important that you always count to make sure you don't have too many of us, because it only takes a second for us to get into something we shouldn't. Also, I'm really curious and love to explore, but I need you to both support and protect me as I learn about the world."*



# What do the rules say?

The key to maintaining compliance with licensing rules is to first read and understand them. In examining any noncompliances that your program has had with staff/child ratio or supervision, begin by reviewing Ohio Administrative Code Rule 5101:2-12-20: Staff/Child Ratios and Supervision.

The rule can be found at:

**<http://codes.ohio.gov/oac/5101:2-12-20>**

After you've read the rule, ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I understand all parts of this rule?
- Do I understand why I was cited as being out of compliance with this rule?
- Have the rule requirements been discussed with staff who are responsible for maintaining compliance with them?
- Has the program designed and implemented any systems to achieve and maintain compliance with this rule?

The following page lists the most commonly cited serious risk noncompliances related to Staff/Child Ratios and Supervision. Following each noncompliance is a reference to a system that your program could use that will help you achieve and maintain compliance. One or more systems may be recommended. Choose the one that would work best for your program.



**Please contact the Child Care Policy Help Desk or your licensing specialist if you have questions regarding licensing rules. The Help Desk number is 1-877-302-2347. Press option 4.**



## Rule 5101:2-12-20 Staff/Child Ratios and Supervision

What are the most common serious risk noncompliances cited by licensing specialists?

**Has your program had any of the following?**

### **Ratio**

- » A staff person left the room to run an errand, gather needed supplies, get something in the hallway, or use the restroom, leaving another staff person over ratio. Refer to System One.
- » Due to a staff person running late, or calling in absent, the center was not adequately staffed and did not have a substitute available to fill in for them. Refer to System Three.
- » The center doubled ratios for any amount of time at nap time, and the group contained an infant. Refer to System Four.
- » A staff person left another staff person over ratio on the playground in order to take a child to the restroom. Refer to System Two.

### **Supervision**

- » A staff person did not count the children when transitioning from one space in the program to another, and a child was left behind. Refer to System One.
- » The center allowed a child to go out into the hallway to get something out of his cubicle and did not supervise the child while he was out of the classroom. Refer to System Five.
- » School-age children were permitted to enter or exit the building unattended when arriving from school or leaving to get on the bus to go to school. Refer to System Five.

## Rule 5101:2-12-20 Staff/Child Ratios and Supervision

# System One

Staff use a name-to-face head count, as well as an attendance sheet, whenever children move from one area of the facility to another.

### Tracking:

- Use an attendance sheet to document the children who are present. Designate an area on the attendance sheet that staff can check to indicate they have counted the children when they transition from one area to another.

### Training:

- Show staff how to indicate both arrival and departure on the attendance sheet. Some suggested systems include:
  - » Use a "/" to indicate arrival and an "X" to indicate departure.
  - » Use an "A" to indicate arrival and "D" to indicate departure.
- Explain the concept of a name-to-face head count. The individual should say the child's name and visually assess that the child is present, not just allow the child to say "here."
- Include a column on the attendance sheet where staff can put a check each time they count the children. Staff should be trained on when this count should take place:
  - » When leaving the classroom to go to another area in the program (cafeteria, large muscle room, art room, playground, etc.)
  - » When leaving the playground to return to the classroom
  - » When leaving another room in the building to return to the classroom
  - » If the restroom is not attached to the classroom, whenever children leave and return from the restroom
  - » Transportation and field trips:
    - » Before leaving the classroom for a field trip
    - » Upon entering the vehicle before driving away
    - » Every five minutes during the field trip
    - » Upon entering the vehicle to board for the return to the center
    - » Upon arrival back to the program
    - » Upon entry back into the classroom
- If two staff people are present with the group, they should both count the children and confirm with each other that all of the children are present and accounted for.
- If the group separates, each staff person should have a list of the specific children they are responsible for. The list should be with the staff person at all times. Example: The group separates, and half the children go into the art room, and the other half go out on the playground.

### Monitoring:

- The administrator needs to ensure that the staff are counting children each time they move from one area to another. The administrator should spot-check staff and watch to see if this is happening. He/she should also randomly go into each room and ask the staff how many children are present.

## Rule 5101:2-12-20 Staff/Child Ratios and Supervision

# System Two

Prior to leaving the room, staff communicate with each other to ensure the staff member remaining in the room will not be over ratio.

### Training:

- Have staff tell other staff that they are leaving the room or develop a code word that they say to each other before leaving a classroom. Each staff person should count the children who will be remaining in the room. To ensure that the room will not be over ratio, they should either say they are leaving or use the code word to their coworker. Only after both staff have said the code word can the staff person leave the room.
- Staff should have alternative means of maintaining ratio if they must leave the room. Suggestions include:
  - » Take a child(ren) with the staff person to run the errand (to gather supplies, get milk from the kitchen for snack, go to the office to give the administrator a message, etc.).
  - » If you must leave the room to take a child to the restroom, ask other children if they also need to go, and take additional children so the room will not be over ratio.
  - » Let the administrator or other staff person who can fill in know you need them to come into the room. You can contact them via an intercom or telephone.
  - » Have established times throughout the day when a floater or the administrator comes to each room to fill in for staff who may need to take a break, run an errand in the building, or return a call to a parent.

### Monitoring:

- The administrator can conduct spot checks on rooms by calling a staff person to the office and listening to make sure the staff are saying the code word to each other before leaving the classroom.
- The administrator should step into the classroom, describe different scenarios that may occur, and ask staff how they would handle various situations. For example, what would they do if:
  - » A child needs to go to the restroom, but if a staff person takes them, the room will be over ratio.
  - » A staff person needs to go down the hallway to get supplies from the closet for an art project.
  - » The cook forgets to bring milk on the lunch cart, and a staff person must go to the kitchen to get it.

# System Three

Develop call-off procedures and substitute policies.

## Training:

- Explain to staff the steps to follow if they need to call in absent.
- The center should develop a call-off list that includes:
  - » The name of the person to call (administrator, assistant administrator, person designated in charge at the program, etc.) and their contact numbers. Be sure to include home and cell phone numbers.
  - » The name and contact numbers of potential substitute staff members, if employees are responsible for finding their own substitutes.
- Establish procedures to follow if a staff person is alone in a room and a coworker is late or has called in absent. These could include the following:
  - » The staff person could assess how many children are present and how many are scheduled to arrive prior to another staff person arriving.
  - » If the administrator or another available staff person is at the program, the staff person on duty could contact them to let them know they will be short-staffed until a substitute arrives. This will alert them that they may need to assist in the classroom.
  - » The staff person could contact additional staff members to see if they can come in early
  - » As a last resort, classrooms may need to be combined in order to maintain ratio. Staff need to follow maximum group size rules if this is necessary. It is better to combine groups than to move one or two children into different groups.
  - » If possible, ask parents if they can remain at the program with their children until your back-up staff person arrives.

## Monitoring:

- The administrator should review policies and procedures with staff members periodically. If there has been a change in schedules or staff at the program, make sure the contact list is current. If substitute teachers have not been used for a period of time, they should be contacted to see whether they are still available to work.



# System Four

Develop procedures to ensure that staff/child ratios are maintained during nap time.

## Tracking:

- Develop a written staff schedule that includes break times. Review the schedule to ensure that ratios are not doubled for more than two hours during nap time.

## Training:

- Explain to staff the rule requirements regarding nap time ratios:
  - » Ratios can be doubled only for two hours during nap time, and only if all children are resting quietly on their cots.
  - » Ratios cannot be doubled if the group has any children younger than 18 months.
- Explain what to do if a wakes up during the two-hour period when ratios are doubled and is no longer resting quietly. Strategies could include:
  - » Offering children quiet activities to keep them busy on their cots.
  - » Calling the administrator or other available staff person to come into the room to maintain ratio until the staff member on break returns.

## Monitoring:

- Periodically review the staff schedule to make sure that, if any changes have been made, ratios are still not being doubled for more than two hours.

# System Five

Monitoring: Develop procedures to ensure that all children are supervised at all times.

## Training:

- Minimize instances when children need to leave the room.
  - » Keep children's cubbies in the classroom so children can access their security items without leaving the room.
  - » If the classroom does not have space for cubbies, have a designated space for children's security items so they don't have to go out into the hallway to access them.
  - » Keep the door to the classroom shut so that it is not easy for children to leave the room unnoticed.
  - » If the door is easily opened, place bells at the top of the door jam. If the door is opened, staff will hear the bells ring and be alerted to see if a child has left the room.
  - » If a child needs to go into the hallway to get something, a staff member must stand in the doorway of the classroom to see the child while he/she is in the hallway.
- Create a procedure to ensure that children who are arriving from or departing to a location (other than with their parents) are supervised during the transition period.
  - » Keep a schedule of bus drop-off and pick-up times posted in the classroom. Staff must meet the children at the bus stop as they arrive at the program.
  - » Set an alarm clock in the room for several minutes prior to the scheduled arrival of the bus to remind the staff member it is time to go out and wait for the children to arrive.

## Monitoring:

- Observe the classrooms to make sure staff are following through on established procedures.
- Observe children during drop-off and pick-up times to ensure that staff are appropriately supervising children to and from their classrooms.



Please contact the Child Care Policy Help Desk  
or your licensing specialist if you have questions  
regarding licensing rules.

Call 1-877-302-2347, option 4.

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