City of Coquitlam | Planning and Development

Child Care Facility Requirements



JULY 2025

Child Care Facilities are a vital part of our community. As parents and caregivers, we depend on standards and regulations to train and govern those we choose to take care of our children. Parents also expect the facilities that provide child care services be safe and healthy. The City is responsible for overseeing the construction of child care facilities and this brochure is designed to help you understand the rules that apply to child care facilities in the City of Coquitlam.



General Regulations

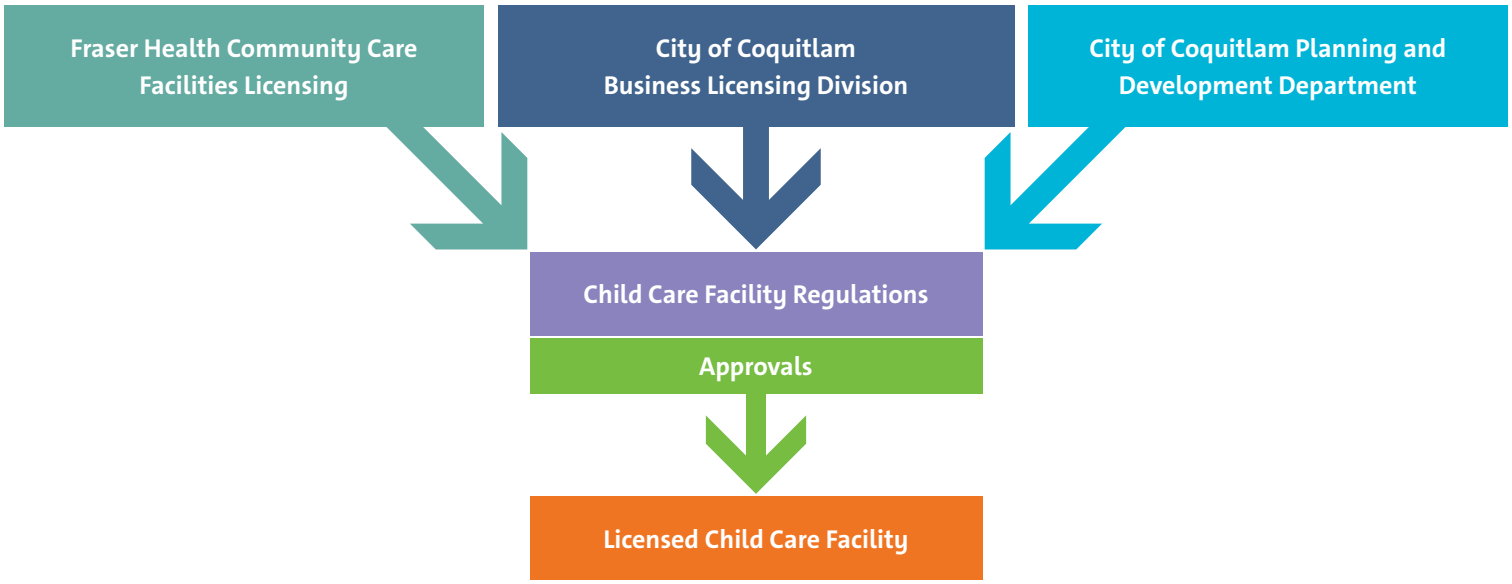
In addition to Provincial requirements for child care facilities governed by the Fraser Health Authority, child care facilities (daycares) are considered businesses in Coquitlam and are subject to a number of City regulations. When a business licence application for a child care facility is received, it is referred to the Building Permits Division, where any proposed building changes are evaluated for health and safety compliance.

Typically most child care facilities are introduced into existing buildings and generally involve only minor physical modifications; however, changes for larger child care facilities must be undertaken through a building permit. In all cases, an examination of drawings and inspections by a Building Inspector are conducted.

In Coquitlam, **child care facilities with more than two children** need to be licensed by **Fraser Health Community Care Facilities Licensing** and meet the requirements of the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* and the Child Care Licensing Regulation. **For child care facilities with no more than eight children** in care and located in a single-family home, section 20 of the Act supersedes requirements of the current BC Building Code if the home meets all of the criteria listed in the Act.

Starting a business?

For more information on running a business see pages 7 and 8.



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Coquitlam Building Permit Requirements

For most child care applications, the City will require a building permit application that provides sufficient information to demonstrate that a facility incorporating child care is safe for that purpose – including compliance with the requirements of the current edition of the British Columbia Building Code (the "Code"). The applicable Code requirements are based on the age of the children and the number of children who will be cared for within the facility. Your application will also be checked for compliance with the City of Coquitlam Zoning Bylaw No. 3000, 1996 and its amendments. You may view this bylaw online at ***coquitlam.ca/zoning***.



Application Requirements

Publications cited in this Guide provide a complete description of the building permit application submission requirements for a child care facility for children. For facilities that are classified as an Assembly major occupancy (Group A, Division 2), documents must be prepared by an architect. A structural engineer may also be required.

Permits are required to carry out all upgrades to a building. Drawings submitted for permit application must be signed and sealed by Registered Professionals, such as architects and professional engineers with appropriate Letters of Assurance.

Application Checklists

Application Content

- ✓ 3 complete sets of architectural drawings at 1/8th scale, or greater
- ✓ 3 sets of site plans showing adjacent uses and parking layout
- ✓ 2 sets of sealed structural drawings with Schedule B Letter of Assurance
- ✓ 3 sets of sealed mechanical drawings with Schedule B Letter of Assurance
- ✓ 3 sets of plumbing drawings
- ✓ 3 sets of electrical drawings showing emergency lighting and exit signs
- ✓ Value of Construction
- ✓ Title search and copies of all documents on title
- ✓ Agent Letter

BC Building Code Requirements

Note: This is not a complete list. Refer to the current edition of the Building Code for complete requirements.

- ✓ Washroom layout and details including accessibility requirements for people with disabilities.
- ✓ Occupant load calculation.
- ✓ Required exits, door sizes, travel distance to be marked.
- ✓ Location of fire separations and assemblies and rated assemblies.
- ✓ Fire-rated doors shall be identified, showing swing direction and closer details.
- ✓ Fire-rated load bearing members identified.
- ✓ Fire-rated exit stair shafts and exit protection.
- ✓ Fire dampers on ducts penetrating fire separations.
- ✓ Rated fire separations between occupancies in building.
- ✓ Fire-rated service rooms.
- ✓ Emergency lighting, smoke alarms, and CO alarms.
- ✓ Location of Fire Extinguishers (ABC type).

When is an Architect Required?

Residential Child Care	
1 to 8 children	
9 or more children	
Commercial Child Care	
1 or more children	*

***NOTE:** Depending on building condition, the requirement for an architect may be waived.

New Child Care Facility Building

A new building for a child care facility, including pre-fabricated modular building(s), shall comply with requirements in Part 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the current BC Building Code. Drawings submitted for a building permit application shall be signed and sealed by professionals of record with appropriate Letters of Assurance.

The application will also address all new underground and off-site perimeter servicing, prepared by a Civil Engineer.

Please note that the City of Coquitlam requires all new buildings to relocate overhead cable to an underground service.

Upgrading of Existing Building

The current BC Building Code applies to an existing building when an owner wishes to renovate, change the building's use, or build an addition.

An existing building may have to be upgraded to full compliance to the current BC Building Code in order to accommodate a child care facility. Such upgrades may include (but are not limited to) the following:

- **fire separations between the child care use and other occupancies/tenants, exit stairs and service rooms;**
- **fire-rated floors and load-bearing structural members and walls;**
- **structural floor loading and seismic upgrades;**
- **fire dampers on all ducts;**
- **fire stops to all penetrations of fire separations;**
- **spatial separation, including amount of windows facing the property line and type of cladding;**
- **exit doors to swing in the direction of exit travel;**
- **fire alarm system;**
- **emergency lighting;**
- **sprinkler system;**
- **volume of water service;**
- **interconnected hard-wired smoke and/or CO detector;**
- **access and washroom for people with disabilities; and/or**
- **electrical, plumbing and mechanical services.**

Other Considerations

1. The applicant should review the existing buildings for compliance with all City Bylaws before making an application for a Building Permit. Work undertaken in the past without benefit of appropriate permits must be identified and included in the child care facility building permit application. (Please see Inspections.) In addition, the building must be located on property that is zoned for child care use. (Refer to Zoning Bylaw No. 3000 for a list of permitted uses within a zone.)
2. Extensions or modifications to the building's plumbing system require a Plumbing Permit with the City of Coquitlam.
3. Work involving electrical and gas services requires permits with Technical Safety BC.
4. The Fraser Health Community Care Facilities Licensing Department requires a 5 lb ABC fire extinguisher mounted in a conspicuous place within the facility.
5. Children's designated play yard shall be contained and fenced, and fencing installed must be in compliance with the City's requirements.
6. Pools, hot tubs and ponds shall comply with City of Coquitlam Building bylaw requirements, including fence enclosure and gate latching, if the child care facility has an outdoor play area.



Tip!

It is highly recommended that you engage a professional such as a registered architect or professional engineer to review the building for Code compliance prior to signing a lease or purchasing a property.

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Residential Child Care – Up to 8 Children Within a Dwelling Unit

Residential Child Care with up to eight children, including any preschool children of the resident, operated within a dwelling unit is considered part of the residential use, which is Group C in the Code. Unless physical changes to the building are expected, no building permit is required.

Child care facilities with over eight children operated within a dwelling unit are not considered part of the residential use and are subject to all the requirements stated below.



Child care facilities are not permitted in buildings containing unauthorized or non-compliant secondary suites.

Child Care Facilities – More Than Eight Children or Operated in a Building Other Than a Dwelling Unit



A Child Care Facility other than what is described above is considered assembly occupancy which is Group A, Division 2 of the Code. (This requirement applies regardless of the ages of the children.)

The relaxation in the current BC Building Code to classify an assembly occupancy (Group A Division 2) with occupant load not exceeding 30 as a personal services occupancy (Group D) would not apply to child care facilities since the relaxation is intended for small restaurants and adult vocational schools.

Other Code requirements for child care facilities serving children under 30 months old are:

- The building must be sprinklered throughout or the child care facility must have exterior exits at ground level.
- The building must have a fire alarm system if building contains one or more other suites or the child care facility shares an interior common egress with other suites.

(Please refer to the current BC Building Code for all Code requirements.)





Inspections

After a building permit has been issued and construction is under way, the permit holder must call for inspections at the various stages outlined in the inspections guide. **Visit *coquitlam.ca/inspections* for easy-to-understand information on how to use the online inspection booking system.** A Building Inspector will visit the site to monitor compliance with the building permit(s).



Inspections for child care facilities not requiring a building permit will be undertaken as part of the initial Business Licence referral. If certain conditions are observed during the course of an inspection, the Building Inspector may require:

- **building permits for the removal of or legalization of any unauthorized construction that has taken place on the property;**
- **plumbing permits where unpermitted plumbing work is identified;**
- **correction of any obvious hazards (e.g. stairs, handrails, guards, furnaces in bedrooms, bedroom egress, clearance to combustibles in the furnace room, open wire circuits, and any other obvious fire safety or health concerns);**
- **decommissioning of any solid fuel burning appliances if they are in the area of the proposed child care facility;**
- **removal of all two-sided key locks from principal exits of the child care facility;**
- **making stairs safe, landscape or grading issues for pedestrian traffic to the entrance/exit of the facility;**
- **decommissioning of any business in the building that generates an increase in vehicle traffic to and from the building; and**
- **removal of any secondary suite within the building.**

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Starting a Business

Starting a business is a major undertaking. There are a number of resources available to assist you with that process. Buying or leasing a building or premises and getting a business licence are just two of the many steps to complete. This information includes details of the important things to consider and review when you are starting a business in Coquitlam and prior to completing a purchase of sale or lease agreement.



The **Business LinQ** resource centre, located at Coquitlam City Hall, offers businesses and future business operators a convenient one-stop shop to link to resources and get help with navigating City processes.

Use Business LinQ to:

- **Learn what is required to start and operate a business in Coquitlam;**
- **Get one-on-one guidance on City permitting and regulatory processes – including licensing, zoning, inspections, and building, plumbing and sign permits; and**
- **Find out about City services and programs that support businesses, including the Economic Development office.**

Business LinQ can help business owners save time and avoid making costly mistakes, such as signing a lease for a space in an inappropriate zone. The service can also connect owners to resources that can help their business thrive and grow in Coquitlam.

Visit ***coquitlam.ca/BusinessLinq*** or call 604-927-3975 for more information.

1. **Zones -** Verify your business will be located in the correct zone.

   Before you begin looking for a site, contact Development Planning to determine which zone or zones are appropriate for your business.

   Be sure to verify that your business is allowed to operate in the zone it is located before you sign a lease or purchase a property!

2. **Meeting Provincial Codes -** Verify that all building improvements and renovations were permitted.

   Modifications to a structure, including electrical, plumbing or heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) work must meet the BC Building Code, Plumbing Code and Fire Code. You should confirm with your leasing or real estate agent that renovations were completed to meet these Code requirements and within required building and/or plumbing permits.

3. **Permits -** If you are planning to renovate or build an addition to an existing building, find out if you need a Building, Plumbing or Fire Sprinkler Permit.

   Building permits are required for the removal, installation and/or relocation of interior walls, doorways and windows. As mentioned above, please note that any previous work completed without permits will require a subsequent permit and may require alterations to meet appropriate Building and Plumbing Code requirements. A fire sprinkler permit is also required if you are making alterations to an existing system.

4. **Signage -** confirm what type of sign(s) you can install and the type of sign permits required.

   Before designing, purchasing or installing any signs, check with Development Planning to ensure that they will be permitted. There are limitations on the size and types of signs you can install. A sign permit is required for any sign placed on a property or installed on a building exterior. You will also be required to remove any previously installed signs that do not meet the City's Sign Bylaw requirements or obtain additional sign permit(s) for signs which do meet the Bylaw requirements but were installed without a sign permit.



Home-Based Businesses

Home-based businesses are an important part of the City's economy, however the City needs to ensure that neighbourhood character and livability is maintained where home-based businesses are conducted. As a result, the re are limitations on the operation of a home-based business or accessory home occupation. Please contact Development Planning for more information prior to obtaining any licences or permits.



Business Licences

The City of Coquitlam requires every person carrying on, maintaining, owning or operating any profession, business, trade or occupation within the city, to hold a valid business licence. The Business Licence must be visibly displayed on the premises. Licence holders operating a mobile business must carry the licence on his or her person while working in Coquitlam. Licences are valid for one year from the date of commencement of the business. ***coquitlam.ca/BusinessLicences***

Further Information

Building Permit Requirements - Building Permits Division
604-927-3441
permits@coquitlam.ca
coquitlam.ca/BuildingPermits

Zoning Requirements - Development Planning Division
604-927-3430
DevInfo@coquitlam.ca
coquitlam.ca/zoning

Business Licences - Business Licensing Division
604-927-3055
BuisinessLicences@coquitlam.ca
coquitlam.ca/BusinessLicences

Resources for child care operators - Fraser Health Community Care Facilities Licensing
604-587-4600
fraserhealth.ca

Electrical and gas system permit requirements - Technical Safety BC
1-866-566-7233
technicalsafetybc.ca



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