



**INFANT TODDLER MENTAL HEALTH
COALITION OF ARIZONA**
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Staff-child Ratios and Group Size Regulations for Child Care Centers Serving Infants and Toddlers

Position Statement

August, 2004

Several decades of research have highlighted the critical importance of the quality of care received by children during infancy and early childhood. Healthy development during these early years requires caregiver-child relationships that are reliably sensitive, responsive, and stimulating. Inadequate care during these crucial years poses a significant risk to children's mental health and to their social, physical, and intellectual development.

In Arizona, thousands of children under the age of 3 years spend a portion of their day in a child care center. The healthy development of these children is affected not only by the care they receive from their family but also by the quality of care they receive from their child care providers. *Research has linked the quality of care children experience in child care centers to a number of factors, many of them typically regulated by states' child care licensing standards. Among the most important of these factors are staff-child ratios and group sizes.* Appropriate staff-child ratios and group size increase the likelihood that children's care will be reliably sensitive to their individual needs and style and responsive to their bids for comfort, social interaction, and cognitive stimulation.

Arizona's Child Care Facilities Rules for staff-child ratios and group sizes are among the nation's worst and deviate dramatically from the standards recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics, The American Public Health Association, the National Association for the Education of Young Children, and Zero to Three: National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families.

The Infant Toddler Mental Health Coalition of Arizona believes that the current Department of Health Services Child Care Licensing Standards regulating staff-child ratios and group sizes for infants and toddlers pose a significant risk to the mental health and development of children affected by these regulations. ITMHCA strongly recommends that the Arizona Standards be revised to conform to the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics, The American Public Health Association, and Zero to Three: National Center for Infants, Toddlers and Families.

The table below contrasts the recommended standards with Arizona's Department of Health Services (AZDHS) Child Care Facilities Rules.

Age	<u>STAFF:CHILD RATIOS</u>		<u>MAXIMUM GROUPS SIZE</u>	
	Recommended	AZDHS	Recommended	AZDHS
Birth – 12 months	1:3	1:5 or 2:11	6	NO LIMITS
13-23 months	1:3	1:6 or 2:13	9	NO LIMITS
24-36 months	1:4	1:8	12	NO LIMITS
3 year olds	1:7	1:13	14	NO LIMITS

