How To Start a Home Daycare

1) Define your program plan

- ☐ Choose ages you'll serve (mixed-age, infants, toddlers, preschool, school-age)

- ☐ Decide capacity (how many children you can safely care for)

- ☐ Set days/hours of operation, holidays, and closure policy

- ☐ Decide meals/snacks approach (provider-supplied vs. parent-supplied)

- ☐ Draft a simple daily schedule (arrival, meals, naps, play, pickup)

- ☐ Write your program description (1–2 paragraphs for marketing + licensing)

2) Confirm licensing requirements (state-specific)

- ☐ Identify your state licensing agency for family child care/home daycare

- ☐ Determine if you are license-exempt or must be licensed (based on number/ages/unrelated children)

- ☐ Review required ratios, group size limits, and supervision rules

- ☐ Review home requirements (space, fencing/outdoor rules, pets, pools/water safety)

- ☐ List required trainings (orientation, CPR/First Aid, safe sleep, background checks, etc.)

- ☐ Create a licensing folder (digital + paper) to store all required documents

3) Set up your business basics

- ☐ Choose your business name (and check if it's already used in your state)

Free resource developed by www.ChildCareED.com

- ☐ Decide business structure (sole proprietor/LLC/etc. — optional but helpful)

- ☐ Open a dedicated business bank account (recommended)

- ☐ Set your tuition rates, deposits, late fees, and payment schedule

- ☐ Plan your startup budget (supplies, safety upgrades, licensing fees, insurance)

- ☐ Decide how you'll track income/expenses (spreadsheet or bookkeeping tool)

- ☐ Confirm you can legally operate from your home (HOA/lease/mortgage considerations)

4) Complete required background checks & clearances

- ☐ Complete background checks for all required household members (per state rules)

- ☐ Gather required IDs and documentation

- ☐ Schedule fingerprinting (if required)

- ☐ Track submission dates + confirmation numbers

5) Secure insurance and basic protections

- ☐ Get liability insurance appropriate for home daycare (if required or recommended)

- ☐ Review homeowner/renter policy exclusions (many don't cover business childcare)

- ☐ Create incident/accident procedures and forms

- ☐ Set up secure document storage (locked cabinet + password-protected digital copies)

6) Prepare the home environment (safety + setup)

Safety essentials

- ☐ Install/confirm working smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors

☐ Create a fire escape plan + post it

☐ Stock a complete first aid kit (and know where it is)

☐ Ensure hazardous items are locked (meds, cleaners, tools, alcohol, matches)

☐ Anchor heavy furniture/TVs; secure cords and blind strings

☐ Cover outlets and address choking hazards (especially for under 3)

☐ Verify safe sleep space (crib/pack-n-play; no soft bedding; per safe sleep guidance)

☐ Confirm outdoor safety (gates, fencing, water hazards, shade, play surface)

Spaces & materials

☐ Create defined areas: play, quiet/reading, meals, diapering/toileting, storage

☐ Choose age-appropriate toys/materials (and remove broken/toxic items)

☐ Set up diapering/toileting supplies and sanitation routines

☐ Plan nap/rest area (separate mats/cribs, labeled linens, cleaning plan)

7) Create policies, handbook, and enrollment paperwork

Parent handbook & policies

☐ Hours, holidays, closures, and provider sick days

☐ Tuition, late pickup fees, payment methods, and refunds

☐ Illness policy (when children must stay home; fever/vomiting rules)

☐ Medication policy (consent, storage, logging)

☐ Behavior guidance/discipline policy

- [ ] Safe sleep policy (if serving infants/toddlers)

- [ ] Drop-off/pick-up authorization and identity checks

- [ ] Emergency closures (weather, power outage, etc.)

- [ ] Termination policy (how either party ends care)

- [ ] Photos/social media permissions

Enrollment packet

- [ ] Child information + emergency contacts

- [ ] Authorized pickup list + passwords (optional)

- [ ] Health history + allergies + care plan (if applicable)

- [ ] Immunization requirements (per state policy)

- [ ] Permissions (field trips, sunscreen, transportation if used)

- [ ] Food program forms (if participating)

- [ ] Signed handbook acknowledgment

8) Set up recordkeeping & daily operations

- [ ] Attendance tracking system

- [ ] Incident/accident report form + log

- [ ] Medication administration log

- [ ] Emergency drill log (fire, severe weather)

- [ ] Cleaning/sanitizing schedule

- ☐ Child files system (enrollment, forms, notes)

- ☐ Communication method with families (daily sheet, app, text/email policy)

- ☐ Supply inventory list + reorder routine

9) Plan learning activities (mixed-age friendly)

- ☐ Choose a simple curriculum approach (themes, centers, or interest-based)

- ☐ Set up learning areas (literacy, blocks, dramatic play, art, sensory)

- ☐ Create a weekly lesson plan template

- ☐ Prepare "activity adaptations" by age (same activity, different challenge)

- ☐ Add daily outdoor time plan (weather alternatives included)

- ☐ Create a routine-based schedule that supports behavior and transitions

10) Get inspection-ready (if licensed)

- ☐ Walk through your home using a licensing readiness checklist

- ☐ Verify posted items (emergency numbers, evacuation plan, licenses if required)

- ☐ Confirm required trainings are completed and certificates saved

- ☐ Confirm required documents are organized and accessible

- ☐ Do a mock day: arrival, meals, transitions, nap, pickup

11) Prepare to enroll and market (simple + realistic)

- ☐ Define your ideal family (ages, schedule, values)

- ☐ Decide enrollment process (tour → interview → paperwork → start date)

☐ Create a waitlist form (even a simple Google Form)

☐ Write your "About" paragraph and policies highlights for your website/social

☐ Take clear photos of your space (safety-first, no children shown)

☐ Prepare a welcome packet and first-week routine guide