

OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL
STATE OF ILLINOIS

Statute, Rule or Standard Policy Interpretation: **One Room Day Care Centers**

Title:	Fire Prevention and Safety
Part:	41 Ill. Adm. Code 100
Section Number:	100.7(b)
Section Title:	Modifications to the Life Safety Code
Policy Number:	11-FP-001

Purpose: This document provides for current policy and guidance to ensure uniform enforcement of the 2000 edition of the National Fire Protection Association’s Life Safety Code and to specifically establish when exceptions are allowed for “one room day care centers”.

Scope: Statewide

Current Code: The 2000 ed. of the NFPA Life Safety Code currently prescribes when new (Chapter 16) and existing (Chapter 17) day care center occupancies must be provided with fire alarm systems and also when smoke detection must be provided in a day care occupancy. More specifically, Section 16.3.4.1 requires “Day care occupancies, other than day-care occupancies housed in one room, shall be provided with a fire alarm system in accordance with Section 9.6” and Section 16.3.4.5 requires “A smoke detection system in accordance with Section 9.6 shall be installed in day-care occupancies other than those housed in one room”. (The corresponding sections of Chapter 17 contain identical requirements for existing day care occupancies).

These requirements have led to questions regarding whether certain configurations qualify as “one room day care occupancies” and thus qualify for exemptions from providing fire alarm systems and/or smoke detection.

Policy Interpretation: Stand-alone structures that contain only one room day care centers should obviously be considered “one room day care center occupancies” and be eligible for exemptions from fire alarm and smoke detection requirements.

Ancillary rooms within a larger room (e.g., bathrooms, utility closets, storage closets, small dinettes within the larger day care client room, etc.) do not constitute separate rooms and therefore, do not negate one large room containing such ancillary space from being considered a “one room day care occupancy”.

If the kitchen space located within the day care room conducts grease-laden cooking and is subject to compliance with NFPA 96 requirements for protection by a commercial cooking suppression system, then the room is not to be considered a one room day care center and will be subject to the fire alarm system and smoke detector requirements of Chapter 16/17 of the LSC.

The use of one room for day care when that room is located within a larger building containing rooms that are occupied for other purposes (e.g., the use of one room for day care purposes within an educational building where the other classrooms are used for teaching purposes or the use of one room for day care purposes within a business

occupancy where the other rooms are used for business purposes) can be considered a “one room day care occupancy only if that one room provides at least one direct means of egress to the exterior of the building for all day care clients without the need to share a common means of egress with other building occupants and without the need for day care center clients to ever be exposed to the common corridor environment.

In such situations, the use of bathrooms outside of the one room day care does not constitute a breach of the one room rule (i.e., clients are allowed occasional use of bathroom facilities in common corridor areas outside of the one room day care facility and the room will still be allowed to be considered a “one-room day care center”).

Reason:

The Life Safety Code’s exemption for not requiring a fire alarm system or even smoke detection in a one room day care center is justified when it is considered that all clients are housed in a single room where a fire will be obvious simultaneously to all occupants of that day care occupancy. Furthermore, in a one-room day care day center, all clients can easily move to the outside of the building as direct-exiting from the room (without the need to navigate intervening corridors) is implied.

However, OSFM inspectors frequently encounter day care centers that are indeed using only one room, but that one room is not a stand-alone one room structure but rather one room located within a larger building (usually the use of one room located in a larger educational/school building or a business office building). This has brought into question the concept of a “one room day care center” and whether the Life Safety Code intended such one room day care occupancies located within a building containing several other occupied rooms to receive the fire alarm and smoke detector exemptions.

When located within another building, the one room used for day care purposes presents the possibility that the clients will need to enter a common corridor with the other building clients to egress the building. Furthermore, it results in day care clients possibly being exposed to fire/smoke from other rooms in the building that expose that egress corridor. Thus, the concept that a fire in any area of the day care center would simultaneously be able to be noticed by all in the day care center is lost because a fire that originates in another room in the building could affect the day care clients.

Therefore, the OSFM will only recognize such mixed-used situations as constituting a one room day care environment if indeed only one room is used for day care purposes and if that one room provides direct egress to the exterior of the building for all day care clients without the need to share a common means of egress with other building occupants and without the need for day care center clients to ever be exposed to the common corridor environment in their path of egress from their one room.

Additional:

Also realize that when day-care centers are located in a building containing mixed occupancies, whether considered a one room day care center or not, the LSC (by Section 16.1.2 for new or 17.1.2 for existing) requires that other than in assembly occupancies used primarily for worship, the day care center must be separated from the other occupancies by not less than 1-hour fire resistance-rated barriers constructed in accordance with 8.2.3.

Effective Date:

January 2011.