

Wisconsin Radon Program: **Schools and Child Care Panel**

Region V Meeting | July 15, 2025

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Wisconsin Radon Program



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT
of HEALTH SERVICES

Radon Regulations in Wisconsin

Schools

No testing or mitigation requirements.

Recommendation: Test every 5 years or after any major renovations.

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Child care centers

Testing and mitigation **required** for licensed centers.

DCF Administrative Code (3/1/2023)

Under Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) administrative code, child care providers are required to:

- Test for radon within 6 months prior to providing care for children.
- Test in the lowest level used by children at least 7 hours per week.
- Notify parents/guardians and mitigate within 12 months if radon test results exceed 4 pCi/L.
- Test again every two years for family centers or every 5 years for group centers.

[DCF 250](#) (family
child care)

[DCF 251](#) (group
child care)

Radon in Child Care Rule: Challenges

Using a certified contractor for testing and/or mitigation is **not** required.

The language in the rule does not always reflect best practices in radon measurement.



Radon Testing

for child care providers

Radon is a radioactive gas that has no smell, color, or taste. It comes from the natural breakdown of uranium in the ground. Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among people who don't smoke. Radon-related lung cancer can be prevented if we reduce the amount of radon in buildings where people live, work, and attend school and child care. **All licensed family and group child care centers in Wisconsin are required to test for radon.** Testing for radon in your center may look different depending on whether your center is a family or group care center. This frequently asked questions (FAQs) guide will help you know what to expect.

FAQ	Family Care Centers	Group Care Centers
Who should test my center for radon?	You can test your center yourself using a short-term radon test kit. You can purchase a test kit from a local hardware store or your regional Radon Information Center . While not required, you may also hire a certified radon measurement contractor .	The Department of Children and Families (DCF) requires one short-term radon test at a minimum. However, testing a non-residential building is complex. It is best practice to use a certified radon measurement contractor to understand the true risk of radon in your building.
What is the cost of testing for radon?	A short-term test kit costs \$10–\$30 per test. Check for discounted short-term radon test kits at your regional Radon Information Center . A certified radon measurement contractor will charge between \$125 and \$150 for a residential building. The child care center is responsible for these costs.	A certified radon measurement contractor will charge from \$500 to \$1500 to test a non-residential building. The cost of testing varies by size of the facility. The child care center is responsible for these costs. To find a certified radon measurement professional serving your county, visit www.lowradon.org .
How should I test for radon in my building?	Test for at least 48 hours in the lowest level of the center that is used by children in care for at least seven hours per week. The winter months are the best time to test. Keep windows and doors closed during testing. Refer to test kit instructions or www.lowradon.org for more information on how to test.	Test for at least 48 hours in the lowest level of the center that is used by children in care for at least seven hours per week. In commercial buildings, you'll need to test more places, including every classroom in contact with the ground. Using a certified radon measurement contractor is recommended.
When do I need to test for radon?	New providers must test for radon within six months of providing care for children. Within five days of receiving results, you must submit a copy to your licensing specialist or DCF regional office . Test your center every two years after the initial test date, no matter what the result is.	New providers must test for radon within six months of providing care for children. Within five days of receiving results, you must submit a copy to your licensing specialist or DCF regional office . Test your center every five years after the initial test date, no matter what the result is.

Radon Mitigation

for child care providers

Radon is a radioactive gas that has no smell, color, or taste. It comes from the natural breakdown of uranium in the ground. Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among people who don't smoke. All licensed family and group child care centers in Wisconsin are required to test for radon and **mitigate (reduce)** it if levels are found above 4 picocuries per liter (pCi/L).

Why is radon mitigation important?

When radon enters a building, it can contaminate the indoor air. If radon is breathed in over long periods of time, it can cause lung cancer. Radon-related lung cancer can be prevented if we reduce the amount of radon in buildings where people live, work, and attend school and child care. A **radon mitigation system** prevents radon from entering a building by moving it from the soil under the building to the outside air. The radon then mixes with air and is no longer harmful.



What should I do if the radon levels in my center are too high (above 4 pCi/L)?

1. Within 12 months of testing, hire a [certified radon mitigation contractor](#) to install a radon mitigation system. A list of nationally certified radon mitigation professionals can be found at www.lowradon.org.
2. Notify the parents and guardians of children in care. You can use the included **notification letter template**.
3. After the mitigation system is installed, **test the building again**. Submit updated test results to your child care licensing specialist or Department of Children and Families (DCF) [regional office](#) within 12 months of your initial test.
4. Test and submit results **every two years** for family centers or **every five years** for group centers no matter what the result is.

Is funding available to help centers pay for radon testing and mitigation?

Child care centers can use the DCF Child Care Counts Payment Program to help pay for radon testing and mitigation. Email DCFDECECOVID19CCPayments@wisconsin.gov for questions about this program.

Radon Notification

letter for parents and guardians

Dear Parents and Guardians:

Our center would like to update you on our efforts to reduce radon levels in our facility. **Radon** is a radioactive gas that has no smell, color, or taste. It comes from the natural breakdown of uranium in the ground. Radon is the leading cause of lung cancer among people who don't smoke. Lung cancer typically develops later in life, so preventing high levels of radon where people live, work, and attend school and child care is important.

Wisconsin law requires routine radon testing and mitigation (if needed) for licensed child care centers. We completed our test on _____ and the level of radon in our facility was _____ picocuries per liter (pCi/L). That's higher than the Environmental Protection Agency's recommended action level of 4 pCi/L. To comply with state regulations and prevent long-term exposure to radon for kids and staff in our facility, we will install a radon mitigation system. This system will remove radon from the ground below the facility before it has a chance to contaminate the air inside. The installation will be completed on _____.

Protecting the health and well-being of the children in our care is our top priority.

Our center is committed to keeping you informed as we take these radon safety measures. Please reach out anytime with questions.

Sincerely,




To learn more about radon, scan the QR code or visit www.lowradon.org.
For health-related questions or to test your own home for radon, contact your regional [Radon Information Center](#) or call 888-LOW-RADON (888-569-7236).



National Radon Action Month (1/2025)

DCF social media (1/8/25)

 Wisconsin Department of Children and Families · Follow
January 8 · 🌐

January is radon awareness month.

Did you know radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer deaths after cigarette smoking. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that radon causes about 21,000 lung cancer deaths in the U.S. every year. Radon is a natural gas in outdoor air that can build up inside your home.

Take action to reduce radon levels and talk to your doctor about any concerns.

<https://bit.ly/2S9itPT>



DHS [press release](#) (1/6/25)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 6, 2025

Contact
DHS Media, 608-266-1683

DHS Encourages Homeowners, Property Owners, and Schools to Test for Radon

Radon exposure is the second leading cause of lung cancer after cigarette smoking

Radon, a colorless, odorless gas, can seep into homes through their foundation and be deadly at high levels. In Wisconsin, 1 in 10 homes has elevated levels. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer, and approximately 962 Wisconsinites have radon-induced lung cancer. Fortunately, radon is easy to test for and leaks can be fixed. This National Radon Action Month, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) is encouraging home and building owners, and schools, to understand their risk and test their buildings for radon.

"Knowing about radon and testing radon levels in your home can save lives," said DHS State Health Officer Paula Tran. "In Wisconsin, we have 17 [Radon Information Centers](#) around the state where experts are available to answer your questions and offer low-cost test kits. Indoor radon levels tend to increase during the colder months, so now is the perfect time to test your home or building for radon if you haven't before."

While radon can affect anyone, children are generally considered to be more sensitive compared to adults due to their smaller lung sizes and faster breathing rates. Along with encouraging testing at home, Wisconsin continues to take steps to improve testing in spaces where children spend significant amounts of time. In March 2023, the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) enacted rule changes which require licensed child care providers to test for radon and install a mitigation system if radon levels exceed the EPA action level. In addition, DHS recommends that [all schools test](#) for radon at least once every five years or upon completion of any major renovations.

"Since the DCF rule went into effect, 41 child care centers across Wisconsin have mitigated high radon, protecting over 820 children enrolled in care from exposure to high radon levels," said DHS State Health Officer Paula Tran. "Preventing exposure to high radon in places where kids spend a lot of time is a significant way to reduce their overall exposure to radon."

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- Paula Tran, Wisconsin State Health Officer
January 6, 2025

Updated numbers (through 7/31/25)

Since the DCF rule went into effect, **63 child care centers** across Wisconsin have mitigated high radon, protecting at least **1,338 children** enrolled in care from exposure to high radon levels.

Radon in Child Care: Current Status?

Interview with DCF (1/6/25) and webinar (x2) with Child Care Resource & Referral (CCRR) Agency staff (5/13/25 & 5/15/25)

- What's going well? What are the challenges? How can the DHS Radon Program help?
- Need for translated materials
- “No news is good news”?

Successes

There are few state laws protecting Wisconsinites from radon.

The DCF rule was a step forward.

We hope this opens the door for more radon protections.



Successes

Child care providers who utilized Child Care Counts funding report it was a huge support in financing their radon mitigation systems.



DCF Child Care Counts (CCC)

Payment Program A – Increase Access to High-Quality Care

Funds initially provided during COVID-19 Pandemic. Providers used these funds for:

- Operating expenses (rent, utilities)
- Addressing building repairs or maintenance (radon mitigation).
- Purchasing materials and supplies
- Covering payroll.
- Offering financial assistance to families enrolled in their programs.



Now Child Care Bridge Payments

As of June 2025, Child Care Counts is now called the Child Care Bridge Payments Program. This shift reflects the program no longer being funded by federal COVID ARPA funds. Now these funds come from recently approved State funding. These funds will be in place until June 2026.



Survey of Child Care Providers

Objective: Better understand the experience of child care providers mandated to perform radon testing and mitigation.

Sample size: 32 licensed family and group child care providers

Methods: Obtained dataset from DCF with list of providers who had needed to install a radon mitigation system since March 2023. Called these providers with a set list of 5 questions asked over the phone for about ~5 minutes each.

Survey of Child Care Providers

How did you pay for it?

What was your experience with testing and mitigation?

What additional resources would have been helpful to you?

Who mitigated, and were they certified?

What was your experience with Child Care Counts funding?

Key Takeaways

Out of 32 child care providers who mitigated, 75% received CCC funds (24). The median amount of funds received was \$14,372 between March 2023 and December 2024.

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They did not feel more education or resources than those already available would have better supported them.

Some mention the cost being alarming at first but later look back at it as a “business cost they needed to make.”

Key Takeaways continued

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When asked how they felt about the radon mitigation system requirements, many equated their experience to how it was working with their contractor. If their contractor experience was positive, they tended to have more favorability to the DCF requirement.

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Many providers recall finding their contractors on their own, mostly by Google search. Most were not aware that contractors in WI may or may not be certified.

Q&A

DHSradon@dhs.wisconsin.gov
608-266-7199

