

Adult family homes in Washington: how the licence works

In Washington, adult family homes care for up to six residents, are licensed by DSHS, and many hold a dementia speciality (SPDE). Here is how to check one.

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In Washington State, an adult family home is a small residential care home licensed by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). The directory lists these homes by licence record, so every listing carries the licence number, the licensed bed count and the specialities on the record.

What an adult family home is

Washington law (RCW 70.128) describes an adult family home as a home that provides room, board and personal care to six or fewer unrelated residents. Care covers help with daily living such as bathing, dressing and medication. Adult family homes are the smallest licensed residential care setting in Washington; assisted living facilities and skilled nursing facilities are larger settings licensed under different rules.

Why dementia homes are on this directory

Most operating adult family homes in Washington are recorded with a dementia speciality. On the DSHS register that code is SPDE. A home with SPDE is recorded on the public record as serving people with dementia. This directory lists only homes whose record carries the dementia speciality, so every listing is a home that publicly serves people with memory conditions.

How the licence works

DSHS licenses adult family homes and regulates them. The public record for a home shows:

- The facility name and address.
- The licence number.
- The licensed bed count.
- The specialities on the record, including the dementia code (SPDE).
- Whether the home has a contract with DSHS services.
- A link to the home's reports, which include inspection history.

There is no opening-hours or website field in the DSHS register, so this directory does not show one for Washington homes. A home's phone and address come straight from the record.

How to check a home

Use the [DSHS Adult Family Home lookup](#). Search by the licence number on a listing, or by county to see the homes near you. The lookup shows the facility record and links to its reports. This directory records the date it read the register, and the licence data here can be out of date, so check the register before you sign.

If you are choosing a home

An adult family home serves up to six residents, so the person you are choosing for is likely to be one of a handful of residents. Ask the home about its dementia training, its staffing ratio and how it handles a resident whose needs change. The Alzheimer's Association Washington State chapter provides free guidance and local resources for families choosing care.

This is general information, not legal or medical advice; confirm the current rules with Washington DSHS before you rely on them.

Frequently asked questions

Do adult family homes in Washington need a licence?

Yes. Adult family homes in Washington must be licensed by the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS). The licence number is public and is shown on each listing in this directory.

What does a dementia speciality mean?

On the DSHS register, a home with a dementia speciality carries the code SPDE. It means the home is recorded as serving people with dementia. More than six thousand adult family homes are operating in Washington, and nearly all of them hold the SPDE code.

How big is an adult family home?

The Washington law that governs adult family homes (RCW 70.128) limits them to six or fewer residents, and the register shows the licensed bed count for each home.

Where can I see a home's reports?

The DSHS lookup has a reports page for each licensed home. This directory links each listing to its public record page, where the reports and inspection history live.

Sources

[Washington DSHS, Adult Family Home lookup](https://fortress.wa.gov/dshs/adsaapps/lookup/AFHAdvLookup.aspx) — <https://fortress.wa.gov/dshs/adsaapps/lookup/AFHAdvLookup.aspx>

[Washington DSHS, Adult Family Home provider resources](https://www.dshs.wa.gov/AL TSA/HCS/adult-family-home-provider-resources) — <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/AL TSA/HCS/adult-family-home-provider-resources>

[Washington State Legislature, RCW 70.128 \(Adult family homes\)](https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70.128) — <https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=70.128>

[Alzheimer's Association, Washington State chapter](https://www.alz.org/wa) — <https://www.alz.org/wa>

This guide is about United States.