

Family Child Care Home

A family child care home is a program typically run by one or two child care providers. The setting is a residential building, often the caregiver's home. Family child care providers are able to care for a small group of children of varying ages. This type of care may offer non-traditional hours such as weekends or evenings.

Preschool Program

Preschool programs are typically offered for children ages 3-5 years old. These types of settings are designed to help prepare children for Kindergarten. They are often part-time and may be provided through a school, faith-based organization, non-profit organization, or child care center.

School-Age Program

School-age programs provide child care for before- and after-school hours. They may also offer care during school holidays and breaks. These programs may be offered by the school, through a community or non-profit organization, or at a family child care home or child care center.



WHO WE ARE

Child Care Aware® of America is our nation's leading voice for child care. We advance a child care system that effectively serves all children's growth, development and educational advancement and creates positive economic impact for families and communities.

To learn more about our mission, visit childcareaware.org



To see a complete list of regional Child Care Aware staff or to download one of our resources, visit us online

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Searching for the Right Child Care Program



If this is your first time looking for child care, you may be wondering where to begin or who to call. We've got you covered with everything you need to know to get started.

How are child care programs regulated?

A child care license is often required for a program to legally operate. States typically have a child care licensing office that oversees and monitors licensed programs. Some cities or counties also have licensing requirements that programs must meet in order to operate. A child care license is important to ensure that programs have met basic health and safety standards in order to protect children.

What types of child care programs are available?

When you are looking for child care, there are several types that you may choose from. There is no one-size-fits-all child care program. You will want to take your family's needs, preferences, and experiences into account and choose the type of care that is the best fit for you. If choosing a formal child care setting, be sure to verify that the program is licensed to provide care in your state, city, or county.

Child Care Centers

A child care center often has a classroom-type setting. Centers tend to be larger and can enroll more children. Children are cared for with others their same age. There is a dedicated director and numerous staff members.



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Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) Care

This type of informal child care setting is often provided in the child's or the caregiver's home. The caregiver may be a relative, friend or neighbor, or a babysitter or nanny. FFN care may be more flexible in terms of hours. This type of care is typically not regulated or monitored (unless they care for children who receive government child care subsidies or vouchers).

How can I find and choose the right program?

Step 1: Get a child care list

Once you have learned about the types of care available to you, it is a good time to call your local Child Care Resource and Referral agency (CCR&R). Your local CCR&R will ask you questions about your family and your child, and they will create a list of child care providers for you to contact based on your needs. They may also have an option to search for child care online. You can search for your local CCR&R at <http://childcareaware.org/ccrr-search-form/>.

Step 2: Do your homework

Once you have your list of child care programs, you can begin to learn about the ones that interest you.

Take time to find out about a program's:

- ✓ **Licensing status:** Many states have child care licensing databases that allow families to verify that a provider's license is up-to-date.
- ✓ **Health and safety inspections:** Inspection reports provide details about a program's compliance with health, safety, and program standards. Many states post inspection reports online.
- ✓ **Quality rating:** Child care providers may be participating in a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) that rates their quality using specific standards. Ask your local CCR&R if your state or area has a QRIS and how to find out if a provider is rated.
- ✓ **National accreditation:** Some child care programs are nationally accredited. This means that they have chosen to meet higher quality standards

than those required by state licensing. Your CCR&R may be able to tell you if any of the providers on your list are nationally accredited.

Child Care Aware®'s State by State Resource Map (<http://childcareaware.org/resources/map/>) can help you find much of this information in your state.

Step 3: Call providers

Once you've done some research on the child care programs you're considering, call each one to get additional information. Use this time to ask about whether there is space for your child, the weekly or monthly rate for your child, hours of operation, and if there are any discounts or scholarships available for child care. If you plan to apply for child care assistance, make sure the provider participates or is willing to participate in your state's program.

If the program sounds like it may meet your needs, set up a time with the child care provider for you to take a tour of the facility. Choose a time when you'll be able to stay for at least an hour.

Step 4: Take the tour

Your child care visit is the best opportunity to:

- ✓ Get a feel for the environment, caregiver interactions, and daily routines
- ✓ Ensure that health and safety measures are in place to protect your child
- ✓ Look for indicators of quality child care

Visit <http://childcareaware.org/selecting-child-care-program/> to find checklists that you can take with you on your child care tour.

