

Types of Child Care

There are a number of options to choose from when looking at child care settings. Programs can be different in a number of ways, sometimes making your choice confusing. Below you will find information to help you choose a program that best fits the needs of your child and family. You may want to look at several types of care before making your decision.

Licensed Care

This type of child care must meet requirements of the State Department of Public Health (DPH). These requirements mainly address health and safety issues. DPH inspects licensed programs on a regular basis and may also conduct unannounced inspections.

- **Family Child Care** – an individual approved by the Connecticut State Department of Public Health to provide care in their own home. Care can be provided for up to six full time children, with only two of those children being under the age of two years. Additionally, there can be up to three additional school age children before and after school (during the school year).
- **Group Homes** – a program licensed by the Connecticut State Department of Public Health that provides care for seven to twelve children. In group homes and child care centers, children are often grouped by age. For example, infants and toddlers are usually separated from preschoolers, and preschoolers from school age children, etc.
- **Child Care Centers** – a program licensed by the Connecticut State Department of Public Health that provides care for thirteen or more children. For infants and toddlers (0-36 months), group size is limited to eight children. There must be one adult for every four children. For preschoolers (3-5 years) and school age children (5-12 years) group size is limited to twenty children. There must be one adult for every ten children.

Unlicensed Care

This type of child care is informal and therefore does not need to meet any state requirements.

- **Relative Care** – care provided by a close relative such as a child's grandparent, aunt or uncle -- either in the home of the relative or the child.
- **In-home Care** - care provided by a caregiver in the child's home, i.e., a nanny, babysitter or an au pair.

Exempt Care

The State Department of Public Health determines that some types of child care are neither informal nor required to be licensed. For example, a preschool run by the board of education may be exempt from becoming licensed. For more information on exempt care, contact 2-1-1 Child Care Infoline.

Quality

When searching for child care, quality matters most. Research shows that quality child care is good for young children's development. Quality care includes a warm, loving relationship with a caregiver, an exciting learning environment, and a safe setting.

- Quality can be found in any type of child care arrangement.
- There is no "right" or "best" type of care.
- Quality is not determined by the title a program uses to describe itself (i.e. Child Care vs. Nursery School)
- Consider and visit different options.
- Choosing a program for your child is a very personal decision; what works for your friend may not be the best choice for your family.
- After you do your research, remember to trust your instincts.



For more information on types of child care programs, please call 2-1-1 Child Care Infoline at 2-1-1 or 1-800-505-1000. Or visit our website at

www.childcareinfoline.org

What Does Quality Look Like?

*Research shows that **quality** child care can be very good for children. This document explains what quality looks like for children of different ages. You will also want to review the Site Visit Checklist to help you make your child care choice.*

Infants and Toddlers

The person caring for my child should:

- provide lots of physical contact such as holding, carrying, rocking, snuggling, etc.
- talk happily to my child: during everyday routine times (such as diapering and feeding) as well as during play times
- respond to my child quickly and lovingly to meet his/her needs
- encourage my child to reach new milestones: for instance, reaching for toys, crawling, or walking
- be patient and gentle, especially as my child is learning how to be social with other children
- use redirection often as a way to guide my young child's behavior
- respect my child's individual needs and routines such as napping, feeding, etc.
- read simple, colorful books to my child or a small group of children
- understand that infants and toddlers need to feel loved and secure in order to develop and grow



Preschool Children

The person caring for my child should:

- help my child feel good about him/herself by: letting my child know when she/he has been successful with a task, having many good one-on-one interactions, offering hugs and smiles, etc.
- listen when my child is talking
- encourage my child to try new things
- sit with my child while he/she is playing and talk with my child about what he/she is doing
- encourage my child to verbalize his/her feelings to others and help my child learn ways to handle conflicts in a positive manner
- show a sense of humor and playfulness
- have realistic expectations for my preschooler's behavior
- give my child opportunities throughout the day to make good choices
- ask many open-ended questions
- read to my child daily and encourage a love of books

School-age children

The person caring for my child should:

- show concern and interest in what happened during my child's day at school
- understand that my child needs time for active play after school
- support my child when he/she is working on homework assignments
- encourage my child to develop and pursue interests and hobbies relevant to his/her age
- include my child in making rules
- try to give my child appropriate responsibilities
- realize that although my child is becoming more and more independent, she/he still needs adult guidance, attention, and affection
- ensure that there is space for my child to store his/her materials that may not be suitable for younger children

For more information on what quality looks like, please call 2-1-1 Child Care

Infoline at 2-1-1 or 1-800-505-1000. Or visit our website at

www.childcareinfoline.org

Options to Help You Pay for Child Care

Many families find it a challenge to pay for child care. In Connecticut, there are some resources available to help eligible families pay for child care.

Care 4 Kids Child Care Subsidy 1-888-214-5437 www.care4kids.org

The Care 4 Kids Program is a state program that assists eligible families to pay for child care. To qualify for this program, applicants must

- Be participating in an approved activity (i.e. job search, work, approved training programs)
- Have an income below 50% of the State Median Income (SMI) (for current income guidelines contact Care 4 Kids)

For example, a family of three with a monthly income of \$1,500 may be eligible to receive assistance.

The Care 4 Kids subsidy can be used for care:

- In a child care center
- In a licensed family child care home
- By a relative
- By an in-home caregiver (i.e. babysitter or nanny).

Care 4 Kids will pay a portion of the weekly/monthly child care fee; parents will often need to pay the provider an additional amount (i.e. the "family fee"). In order to receive Care 4 Kids payments, the applicant must either be:

- Working,
- In an approved training program through the Jobs First Employment Services Program
- Or a teen parent attending high school.

Please contact Care 4 Kids at
1-888-214-5437 to see if you are eligible.



Sliding Scale Programs

Some child care programs offer a sliding scale reduction to parents. This scale decides how much a family will pay based on their income and family size. Parents are encouraged to ask programs if they offer a sliding scale. Some examples of programs that operate on a sliding scale are:

Early Head Start – a federally funded program for pregnant women, infants and toddlers that runs part time/part year at no cost with a possible home visiting component. It may also have a full time/full year component based on a sliding scale that is center based.

Head Start – a federally funded center for children ages 3-5 years old that runs part time/part year at no cost, but may also have a full time/full year program based on a sliding scale.

- Head Start and Early Head Start services are not available in all communities

School Readiness – a state funded program for children ages 3-5 years old that is available in urban areas and some rural/suburban communities. Town residency is required to qualify for this program.

State Funded Centers – a state funded program that services mostly children ages 3-5 years old. However, there are some centers that do offer these subsidized slots for infants and toddlers or school age children as well.

Scholarships

Some programs offer scholarships that will help pay for child care. These scholarships are usually funded by a grant from another organization. An application process is necessary and some restrictions or qualifications may be in place.



For more information on options to help you pay for child care, please contact 2-1-1 Child Care Infoline at 2-1-1 or 1-800-505-1000. Or visit our website at www.childcareinfoline.org

Licensing vs Accreditation

As a parent searching for quality child care, you may hear providers say “I am licensed” or “We are accredited”. What do these terms mean? How does this information help you in choosing child care?

Being licensed and being accredited are different.

Licensing: Licensing regulations are set by *each individual state*. The goal is to ensure the safety and well-being of children. Programs that are licensed must meet the state's *minimum standards*. Each state defines which types of child care arrangements must be licensed.

The Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH) is the state agency responsible for licensing child care programs. DPH:

- visits and inspects programs on a regular basis
- conducts unannounced inspections
- investigates complaints
- conducts background checks on providers (and household members for family child care)

To learn more, you can visit their website at

www.dph.state.ct.us/BRS/Day_Care/day_care.htm#Regulations

Parents are encouraged to call the DPH Day Care Licensing Unit for:

- information on regulations
- checking on substantiated complaints
- filing a complaint against a licensed program

They can be reached at 1-800-282-6063.

When is a child care license required?

Child care arrangements that are:

- For more than 3 hours a day
 - Taking place outside of the child's home
 - On a consistent basis (i.e. the third Monday of every month)
- must have a license

What are the categories of licensure?

- Family child care home (caring for a maximum of 6 full time and 3 school age children)
- Group child care home (caring for 7 to 12 children)
- Child care center (caring for 13+ children)

Are any child care options exempt from licensing? Yes

- Nanny care
- Relative care (sometimes called “Kith and Kin” or “Family, Friend and Neighbor Care”)
- Programs administered by public or parochial schools
- Drop-in programs where the parents are on premises (i.e.: playgroups, gym, church, etc.)

Accreditation: These are standards created by *national groups*. Accreditation standards are most often higher than licensing regulations. Child care programs can voluntarily become accredited; it is not mandated by state law. Therefore, accredited child care programs have gone beyond the minimal licensing standards to assist them in providing quality care.

What types of early childhood programs can become accredited?

- Family child care homes
- Group child care homes
- Child care centers
- Kindergarten classrooms

What are the most common types of accreditation?

<i>Accreditation</i>	<i>Type of child care</i>	<i>What are the main standards addressed?</i>	<i>Where can I get more information?</i>
National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)	Family child care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships • Environment • Activities • Developmental Learning Goals • Safety and Health • Professional Business Practice 	Visit their website: www.nafcc.org or call 1-800-359-3817
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)	Child care centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactions among staff and children • Curriculum • Staff and parent interactions • Administration • Staff qualifications and development • Staffing patterns • Physical environment • Health and safety • Nutrition and food safety • Program evaluation 	Visit their website: www.naeyc.org or call 1-800-424-2460
National AfterSchool Association (NAA)	School-age programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human relationships • Indoor environment • Outdoor environment • Activities • Safety, health, and nutrition • Administration 	Visit their website: www.naaweb.org or call 1-800-617-8242

For more information on licensing and accreditation, please call 2-1-1 Child Care Infoline at 2-1-1 or 1-800-505-1000. Or visit our website at

www.childcareinfoline.org

Questions to Ask Potential Providers Over the Phone

Below are some questions you may want to ask when you are searching to find a child care provider that meets your needs:

- Are you licensed? Are you accredited?
- What hours are you open?
- How many children are currently in your care?
- What are the ages of the children in your care?
- How many children are in the program full-time/part-time?
- How much do you charge?
- What is your policy on payment during holidays, vacations, and sick days?
- What is your policy when a child is ill/you are ill?
- Are you certified to give medications?
- Are you current with your first aid and CPR certification?



- How long have you been in the child care field?
- How long do you plan to continue in this field?
- What is your experience/education? What is the experience/education of your staff?
- What is your typical day like?
- What activities would my child experience?
- How do you help my child learn new skills?
- How will you accommodate my child with special needs?

- How do you handle discipline? Do you have a written discipline policy?
- Do you help with toilet training or does my child need to be toilet trained?
- What meals/snacks do you provide?
- Do you provide transportation or go on field trips? If yes, do you provide car seats or do parents? Do you have insurance?
- What school districts do you serve?

If your child speaks English as a second language, ask:

- Does anyone on your staff speak my child's language?
- Do other children in your care share my child's culture?

REFERENCES

* Ask the provider for names and telephone numbers of parent references.

Remember that a phone interview does not substitute for a visit to the program. Please refer to the *Site Visit Checklist* included in this packet for information on what to look for when visiting a program.



For more information on interviewing a child care provider, please call 2-1-1 Child Care Infoline at 2-1-1 or 1-800-505-1000. Or visit our website at www.childcareinfoline.org

Site Visit Check List

Below is a list of things to look for when visiting potential child care providers.

Provider/Child Interactions:

- ___ provider is warm and friendly with the children
- ___ provider and children are happy and actively involved in a variety of age appropriate activities
- ___ provider speaks to individual children frequently and at their level
- ___ provider handles discipline in a calm manner with an emphasis on helping children resolve conflicts
- ___ provider interacts with children through conversation and play, rather than just supervising
- ___ provider allows children to make choices throughout the day
- ___ provider encourages independence
- ___ provider has clear, consistent rules and gives reasons for them
- ___ provider helps children use words to solve problems
- ___ provider teaches children to respect differences in others

Indoor/Outdoor Spaces:

- ___ ample indoor and outdoor space is clean and suitable for children including those with special needs
- ___ safety is addressed through working smoke alarms, posted exit signs, covered electrical outlets, etc
- ___ if the program is licensed, ask to see the most current licensing inspection report
- ___ adequate lighting is present and child sized furniture is available
- ___ age-appropriate toys are visible, easily accessible and stored in an organized manner
- ___ children's projects are displayed at children's eye level
- ___ activities are encouraged that focus on all areas of development
 - ___ fine motor skills (i.e. stringing beads to develop hand muscles)
 - ___ gross motor skills (i.e. dancing, skipping and jumping)
 - ___ social/emotional skills (i.e. reading books that discuss feelings)
 - ___ cognitive skills (i.e. putting together puzzles)
- ___ noise level is comfortable for children
- ___ diapering/toileting areas are sanitary; toys and play areas are sanitized daily
- ___ posted schedules are flexible and designed to meet the needs of individual children
- ___ enough providers are present for the group's size and age

Materials and Supplies:

- ___ there are a variety of materials for the number of children in the program

___age-appropriate toys are reflective of many cultures, ethnicities, genders
___materials encourage children to learn new skills and are in good repair
___books and other reading readiness materials are available and used daily

Program Policies:

___policies exist and are shared with parents regarding fees, payment, vacation time, sick children, etc.
___program provides references of current/past parents
___program follows an educational curriculum
___care is consistent, with little turnover in staff

Parents' Needs:

___parents are well informed about their child's day through daily conversations or notes
___parents' input is valued and there are opportunities for meaningful involvement in the program
___parents are allowed access to the program at all times and encouraged to visit
___parents are greeted in a warm and friendly way

While visiting the program, talk to other parents that you see and ask them about their experiences with the program. A next step can be to check the references of current/past parents who used the program. Some questions to ask include:

- What did you like best/least about the child care provider?
- Did the provider offer activities geared towards the child's age?
- Did the provider make you and your child feel comfortable in the program? How?
- Did the provider keep you well informed about your child's development? How?
- Was the provider dependable and reliable?
- If you could change anything about the program what would it be?

**For more information on what to look for when visiting child care providers,
please call**

2-1-1 Child Care Infoline at 2-1-1 or 1-800-505-1000. Or visit our website at

www.childcareinfoline.org

Tips for a Successful Child Care Arrangement

Open Communication

Expect your child care provider to:

- Give you frequent and full updates on your child's progress.
- Ask how your child is doing at home.
- Welcome all of your questions.
- Talk to you about solving any difficulties and provide resources if needed.
- Be understanding of any mixed feelings you may have about using child care.
- Be willing to talk with you briefly on the phone if you call to check in.

Your provider may expect you to:

- Provide information on your child's routines, activities, and preferences.
- Give frequent and full updates on your child's progress or concerns at home.
- Clearly define your wishes and expectations regarding child care.
- Participate in program activities such as field trips or by donating materials.

Written Agreement of Terms and Arrangements

Expect your child care provider to:

- Provide written business policies (i.e. - fee and payment schedule, inclement weather, sick child, parent visits, program closing, discipline procedures, field trip and transportation, safety procedures and disaster plans).
- Tell you *in advance* if they are going to change their hours or prices.
- Give at least one month notice if they are no longer going to care for your child.
- Even if they will not be available for just one day, give at least two weeks notice.

Your provider may expect you to:

- Accept written agreements regarding program policies.
- Pick up at agreed upon time.
- Pay your fee on time.
- Give advance notice if hours or days of care change.
- Follow all agreed upon program policies.
- Keep all emergency numbers and contact people current.



Honesty, Trust and Respect

Expect your child care provider to:

- Make ONLY commitments they can keep.
- Tell you about any problems or accidents.
- Not discuss your child or family to friends or co-workers.
- Respect the personal decisions/beliefs of your family.
- Never take sides in any family disputes such as custody battles.
- Keep personal beliefs private (i.e. religion, politics, family make up)
- Offer advice in a way that is supportive and non-critical.
- Report any suspected child abuse or neglect to the Department of Children and Families at once (as is required by law).

Your provider may expect you to:

- Ask questions; not make assumptions or quick conclusions when issues arise.
- Be open and truthful with how the child care arrangement is working.
- Respect the provider's family time.



For more information on how to have a successful child care arrangement, please call 2-1-1 Child Care Infoline at 2-1-1 or 1-800-505-1000. Or visit our website at www.childcareinfoline.org

Preparing Your Child for Child Care

In order to best prepare your child for child care, you may want to do the following things.

- Before your child begins child care, visit the program together. This will give your child a chance to meet with the provider(s) and other children.
- Talk positively with your child about the program or provider. Even if you are nervous about leaving your child for the first time, try to stay positive so your child doesn't pick up on your fears. In time, your comfort level will increase.
- You can talk to your child about what will happen during the day at child care. You may want to remind your child that this is his/her special place to be while you are at work or training.
- If possible, be prepared to stay briefly for the first few days until your child becomes familiar with the setting. It also allows you to ask questions of the provider and get to know that person better.
- Bringing a favorite toy, doll, blanket or family picture will help your child feel more comfortable, especially when it is time to say goodbye.
- Children react to separation in many different ways. It can be normal for your child to cry during drop off. Having a consistent goodbye routine will help your child adjust. Offer your child a hug and kiss and tell him/her when you will be back. Ask your child care provider for suggestions if your child is having a difficult time adjusting.
- Never leave without saying "goodbye". It might make your child feel like he/she cannot trust you.
- When your child is well rested and has an unrushed morning at home, it will be easier for him/her to start their day in child care. Many families find it easier to pick out clothes and pack lunches the night before.
- Before you know it, the daily separations and the joy of being together again will be part of your day to day life.



For more information on preparing your child for child care, please call 2-1-1

Child Care Infoline at 2-1-1 or 1-800-505-1000. Or visit our website at

www.childcareinfoline.org

Parent Internet Resources

General Information

www.infoline.org 2-1-1 Infoline

Connecticut's statewide resource and referral agency for health and human services

www.childcareinfoline.org 2-1-1 Child Care Infoline

Resources on choosing quality child care and other consumer education information is available. Parents can also search for child care in their area through the on-line database.

Licensing Information

www.dph.state.ct.us/BRS/Day_Care/day_care.htm CT State Department of Public Health

A quick connect to the Department of Public Health's website to find out about licensing regulations and other links.

Child Development and Parenting

www.zerotothree.com Zero to Three

Resources on the first years of life for parents and professionals.

www.babycenter.com The Baby Center

Information on child development for providers and parents.

www.parentsaction.org Parents Action

National non-profit organization that develops parent education materials, connects parents with one another, and fights for issues such as early education, and high quality, affordable child care.

www.parents.com Parents

Website produced by Parents magazine exploring a variety of parenting issues.

www.bornlearning.org Born Learning

Campaign that helps parents, grandparents, and caregivers explore ways to turn everyday moments into fun learning opportunities.

Health and Safety

www.healthykids.org Healthy Kids, Healthy Care

Website containing 34 key health and safety practices for parents and families to look for when evaluating and choosing child care/early education programs. Parents can also use the resources to help improve the quality of their child's current program.

www.chdi.org Child Health and Development Institute of CT

Organization promoting the healthy development of children in CT. Two publications available at this site: Vol. 1 and Vol. 2 Caring for Connecticut's Children. Once on website, click on "Resources" and then on "Publications" to view a copy.

www.safekids.org Safe Kids

Information for keeping children safe including product recalls.

www.beansprout.net Bean Sprout Networks

Website addressing issues of the health and safety of children

www.cpsc.gov US Consumer Product Safety Commission

Information on product recalls and safety.

www.huskyhealth.com HUSKY

Healthcare for uninsured kids and youth

Quality Issues

www.nccic.org National Child Care Information Center

Resources which address the impact of quality child care for young children

www.naeyc.org National Association for the Education of Young Children

Organization dedicated to improving the well being of all young children, with a particular focus on the quality of educational and developmental services for children birth to eight years old

www.nafcc.org National Association for Family Child Care

Organization dedicated to promoting quality child care by strengthening the profession of family child care

www.naaweb.org National After School Association

Organization dedicated to the development, education, and care of children and youth during their out-of-school hours.

Special Needs Issues

www.cpacinc.org CT Parent Advocacy Center

Website that assists parents in understanding special education laws to communicate and participate more effectively in their child's education.

www.nichcy.org National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities

Website addressing issues related to children with special needs.

www.birth23.org Birth to Three

Connecticut's program to provide early intervention services for infants and toddlers.

www.circleofinclusion.org Circle of Inclusion

Information for families on inclusive education for children birth to eight. Spanish version available.

Child Abuse Prevention

www.state.ct.us/dcf/ State of CT Department of Children and Families

State sponsored website defining abuse and neglect and who is mandated to report cases.

www.parentsanonymous.org Parents Anonymous

Website offering support regarding the stress of parenting.

Child Care Subsidy

www.ctcare4kids.com Care 4 Kids

Program that helps low to moderate income families in Connecticut pay for child care cost

While looking for information regarding children and families, the websites listed above may be helpful. The list is by no means complete, but rather represents a variety of topics and interests.

2-1-1 Child Care Infoline is not responsible for the contents of these sites or any off-site pages referenced through these links.



MEMO

For more information, dial 2-1-1 or 1-800-505-1000

To: Child Care Consumer
From: 2-1-1 Child Care Infoline
Subject: Dept. of Public Health's Information/Complaint Line

The State Department of Public Health is the agency responsible for issuing and maintaining the licenses for Child Day Care Centers, Group Day Care Homes and Family Day Care Homes in Connecticut.

Parents are encouraged to call the Day Care Licensing Unit for information on the regulations, to check on possible complaints regarding licensing violations or to file a complaint against a licensed program if needed.

1-800-282-6063
1-800-439-0437

If you have any questions, please feel free to call 2-1-1 Child Care Infoline.
