

EARLY CARE & LEARNING PROGRAM OPTIONS

There are several types of child care programs available and each offers its own special benefits. Please consider which type best meets the needs of your family.

CHILD CARE CENTER

Any facility that provides child care for more than five children who are unrelated to the operator (licensed, licensed-exempt).

FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME

A provider who offers child care in their own home for a limited number of children (licensed or registered). Licensed homes are regulated and inspected by the Department of Children and Families. Registered child care homes are not inspected but are regulated for provider screenings, capacity, and trainings.

LARGE FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME

A provider who offers child care in their own home for a maximum of twelve children. They are regulated and inspected by the Department of Children and Families.

HEAD START PROGRAMS

Child development programs that are usually funded by the federal and state government for income eligible families or families with special needs (licensed and licensed-exempt).

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

School age programs offered by centers, family child care homes, youth organizations and public schools. These programs operate before and after school and when school is not in session such as summer vacations and holidays (licensed and licensed-exempt).



INFORMAL CARE

Unregulated care provided by someone of your choice (friend, neighbor, relative, nanny). Legally, this provider can only care for one family's children other than their own.

VISIT

Your next step is to visit the centers or family child care home providers that you have determined meet your initial requirements.

Please find our Quality Provider Checklist to assist you in your visit. Checklist is located in the back of the Child Care Directory.

Making an appointment with each provider helps to ensure the director or provider will have time to talk with you and thoroughly answer your questions.

Preferably your visit should be during operating hours so you can observe the classrooms, teachers and children.

Remember to trust your and your child's instincts

CONTINUE TO MONITOR & OBSERVE

Once your child is enrolled, make it a point to talk regularly with the staff.

Most importantly, talk to your child about his or her experience with the caregiver and other children. If your child cannot yet talk, watch his/her behavior and look for clues. Listen to your child!



FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME LICENSING AND REQUIREMENTS

Family child care homes may either be licensed or registered according to state statute.

Licensed family child care homes are inspected a minimum of 2 times per year by the local licensing authority.

Registered homes are not inspected.

A family child care provider must be at least 18 years of age.

All family members over the age of 18 years and a child care substitute must have an attestation of good moral character, annual abuse registry clearance, and local and federal criminal checks including fingerprinting. Delinquency screening must be done on children 12-17 years of age residing in the home.

The child care provider must take 30 clock-hours of family child care training and 5 hours of early literacy training before becoming registered or licensed.

The child care provider must pass competency exams and complete 10 hours of in-service training per year thereafter.

A large family child care home provider must have the above requirements but also take an additional 10 hours of training the first year. The child care provider must have a Florida Child Care Professional Certificate (FCCPC) and be licensed as a family day care home for 2 consecutive years in Florida prior to licensure as a large family child care home provider. There must be an additional qualified child care provider working in the home when enrollment reaches eleven or more children.

Discipline must be age appropriate and may not be severe, humiliating, or frightening. Spanking is not allowed. Discipline may not be associated with food, rest, or toileting.

The child care provider must have a current CPR and First Aid certificate of completion.

Department of Children and Families licensing office:
941-751-8472 (Desoto and Port Charlotte) or 239-338-1476 (Englewood and Punta Gorda).

Department of Children and Families licensing office:
863-619-4100 Hardee and Highlands.

HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES

- Hazardous products shall be stored separately and locked or out of a child's reach
- A complete First Aid kit and manual
- A working fire extinguisher (minimum requirements: 2A10BC)
- Outlet safety plugs
- Enrollment form for each child
- Immunization, physicals, and other required medical documentation
- Emergency contact information on each child



FAMILY CHILD CARE MAXIMUM GROUP SIZE

A provider must adhere to one of the following group size regulations. Children under 13 years of age related to caregiver must be counted.

- Maximum of four children from birth to 12 months of age
- Maximum of six children, with no more than 3 children age birth to 12 months
- Maximum of six preschool children if older than 12 months of age
- Maximum of 10 children if no more than five are preschool age, and of those five, no more than two are under 12 months of age

Provider must have a written emergency plan as well as a trained substitute.

Substitutes caring for children less than 40 hours per month are required to have a 3-hour training class, Infant/Toddler CPR and First Aid before caring for children. Substitutes caring for children more than 40 hours per month must have 30 hours of training and 5 hours of early literacy training, Infant/Toddler CPR and First Aid training.

CHILD CARE CENTER LICENSING AND REQUIREMENTS

To operate legally in Florida, all licensed child care centers must meet minimum state standards.

All licensed child care centers are inspected a minimum of three times per year by the Florida Department of Children and Families.

LICENSED CENTER: MINIMUM REGULATIONS

Screening of staff includes State and FBI fingerprints, child abuse registry, local law enforcement, and attestation of good moral character.

Staff must complete 40 introductory hours, 5 hours of early literacy training and pass competency exams within the first year. At least one staff person must have a Florida Child Care Professional Certificate (FCCPC) for every 20 children.

At least one staff must be present with current CPR and First Aid training.

Discipline must be age appropriate and may not be severe, humiliating, or frightening. Spanking is not allowed. Discipline may not be associated with food, rest, or toileting.

Department of Children and Families licensing office:
941-751-8472 (DeSoto and Port Charlotte) or 239-338-1476 (Englewood and Punta Gorda).

Department of Children and Families licensing office:
863-619-4100 Hardee and Highlands.

HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS FOR CHILD CARE CENTERS

- Physical and immunization records on file for each child
- Medications and cleaning solutions kept under lock and key
- Hand washing before and after diapering and toileting
- Supervision of children at all times
- Toys and playground equipment in good repair

CHILD CARE CENTERS STAFF TO CHILD RATIOS

Ages	Adult/Children
Under 12 months	1:4
1 Year	1:6
2 Years	1:11
3 Years	1:15
4 Years	1:20
More than 5 Years	1:25

Mixed age groups with infant under 1 year.....1:4

Mixed age groups with infant over 1 year.....1:6

Mixed age groups with children over the age of two....ratio
is based on the majority of children in the group.

LEGALLY EXEMPT FROM LICENSURE

- Programs administered by religious organizations that file religious exemption
- Programs administered through the Department of Education (except for teen parent programs which include infant care)
- School age programs run by national organizations who offer a recreational program



CHILD CARE CHECKLIST

This checklist includes the most important aspects of quality child care. Use it as a guide to select a child care program that best meets your needs.

Basic:

- License/Registration displayed
- Required staffing ratios are met
- Written policies are available (including discipline policy)
- The hours meet my needs
- Other



Physical Facility:

- The room is bright and cheerful
- Enough space for activities
- There are enough toys, paints, books, etc. for all children
- Building and playground are clean
- Equipment and supplies are within reach of children
- Other

Caregivers:

- Caregivers enjoy what they do
- Positive discipline techniques used
- No physical punishment or other negative measures used
- Children are treated as individuals
- Caregivers comfort the children appropriately when necessary
- Other

Parental Involvement:

- Parents may make unannounced visits (open door policy)
- Line of communication between parents and caregivers is open
- Parent participation is encouraged
- Parents notified of accidents or illness as they occur
- Other

CHILD CARE CHECKLIST

Program:

- Daily schedule is posted
- Quiet and active play is balanced
- Activities are age appropriate and address child's needs (physical, emotional, social, and developmental).
- Outdoor play is scheduled daily
- Rest/nap policy reasonable
- Other

Health and Safety:

- Emergency contacts kept on file
- Staff has CPR/First Aid training
- Staff observes safe hygiene: wash hands after changing each child and wiping faces and noses
- Diaper changing pads are non-absorbent material and cleaned after use
- Areas are child proof and enable children to explore safely
- Other.

Infant/Toddler:

- Children are not left unattended
- Children are fed, diapered, and napped according to the child's schedule

- Infants are held while having bottles
- Unused milk and food is discarded
- Other

General Impression:

- Children seem happy here
- I would feel comfortable leaving my child here
- I would be happy as a child here
- References provided
- Other