

Parent Guide to Finding Quality Child Care

We are here to assist you in your child care search. CDCA's goal is to help you make an informed choice through referrals and consumer education. Please read the information carefully. There is no fee for the service. All information discussed with families is confidential. If you have any questions, call CDCA at (314)531-1412 and ask to speak to a Child Care Consultant.

YOUR CHILD CARE SEARCH

From the beginning you will want to look for:

- A reliable and stable arrangement.
- Caring people who enjoy children.
- A healthy and safe environment.
- Interesting and challenging daily activities

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Your child - Some children need small quiet groups; others do better in large groups. It is important for children to have consistency, so consider your child's long term needs.

Your family needs - If you have more than one child, you may want the children together for convenience, or you may have to find separate arrangements to find the best child care for both ages.

Location - Do you want the child care near your home, near work or somewhere in between?

Hours - Consider your drive time to and from work. Do you need the child care provider to be flexible?

Fees and other costs - Fees vary greatly depending on area and ages of children.

CHOOSING CHILD CARE

There are some basic things to look for in judging the quality of the program. Quality of child care does affect children. In addition to a safe and healthy place, also examine these factors:

- Smaller group sizes.
- A program where children are learning by doing and the activities are appropriate for the age of the child.
- A program where parents are welcome to drop in and are invited to participate in activities.
- A caregiver who plans to be in the field for a while (at least one year).
- Caregivers trained in child development and health and safety and a Center Director who is also trained in management.
- Space that is safe and interesting for your child.

CHECKING OUT YOUR OPTIONS

Once you have identified some possible child care arrangements, interview the child care providers.

After you have made an initial visit, drop in again to observe your child's group, the programs, ask questions, read materials and interview providers, you will have lots of important information to help you with your decision.

Ask yourself if you trust the provider and if you feel comfortable leaving your child there.

Selecting child care is your responsibility. CDCA does not recommend one child care provider over another.

FAMILY CARE SAFETY REGISTRY

Missouri's Family Care Safety Registry was established to protect children and provide background information on potential caregivers. Background screening information about a caregiver includes: state criminal background check (specific Missouri criminal convictions only) child/abuse and neglect records, and sexual offender information. All workers in licensed facilities are screened as part of their licensing requirements. To request information on a registrant's background or to request a screening form, call toll-free 866-422-6872 Monday-Friday 7am-6pm. You will need the worker's Social Security number to request background screening information and date of birth. For more information about the registry visit www.dhss.mo.gov/FCSR, screening forms are also available online.

AFTER YOU HAVE MADE YOUR CHOICE

- Prepare your child and yourself for this new experience.
- Keep working to make it successful.
- Communication is very important.
- Ask questions.
- Share information about your child and be available to discuss your child.
- Establish clear written agreements in advance to prevent misunderstandings.

CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS

CDCA responds to all concerns and complaints received. We will record the concerns and consult with you regarding further action to take, if appropriate. Parent feedback is an important part of the Child Care Resource and Referral service. You will be making a contribution to your community if you provide feedback to us about programs you have observed, and if you report information about serious licensing violations or unsafe or unhealthy conditions. We also advise parents to call the Missouri state hotline at 800-392-3738 if you believe that a child is being abused or neglected.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Call the IRS toll-free 800-829-1040 and ask about the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (Form 2441 and Publication 503) or the Earned Income Tax Credit or visit <http://www.irs.gov/FCSR>

Head Start 1-866-777-7827

Department of Social Services - To request an application to find out if you are eligible for Child Care Subsidy call:

St. Louis City (314) 314-340-5600 or 314-340-5600 for switchboard

St. Louis County (314) 314-426-9600

Franklin County (314) 636-583-2571

Jefferson County (314) 636-797-9601

Lincoln County (314) 636-528-8521

St. Charles County (314) 636-940-3170

Warren County (314) 636-456-3307

If you are not eligible for Head Start or state child care subsidy, other options may include sliding fee scale programs or scholarships.

TYPES OF CHILD CARE

Licensed Child Care

A license means that the child care provider and the facility are monitored for health and safety standards, staff:child ratios, group sizes, equipment, staff qualifications, training and other items.

Licensing is done by the Department of Health and Senior Services. Licensing rules are available in every licensed program and a copy of the license should be posted in an obvious location.

All licensing records are open for public review. You may call the Child Care Licensing Unit for an appointment to read the file of any licensed home or center. In St. Louis call (314) 877-0210.

Licensed Child Care Center A facility operated in a location separate from the provider's living quarters.

Licensed Group Child Care Home Any person caring for children in a facility licensed by the state for 11-20 children, not related to the provider. These programs meet the same licensing rules as centers.

Licensed Family Child Care Any person caring for children licensed by the state to care for up to 10 children, not related to the provider.

License Exempt Child Care

License Exempt Child Care Center Any facility in a location separate from the provider's living quarters under the control of a religious organization. These facility are state inspected for certain health and safety requirements but are not required to be licensed, they may voluntarily become licensed.

Preschool or Nursery School A program for preschool children for no more than four hours per child per day. If privately owned, or if operated by a religious organization, they are state inspected for certain health and safety standards. If operated by a school system, they are not regulated by the state. Nursery Schools are not required to be licensed, but they may voluntarily choose to do so.

Unlicensed Child Care

Unlicensed Family Child Care Home Any person caring for four or fewer children, not related to the provider. They may voluntarily become licensed.

Unlicensed Family Child Care Providers on CDCA's referral list have completed an application to be listed with CDCA which includes:

- A health and safety self-certification form.
- A statement of good health report with tine test for Tuberculosis.
- A fire evacuation plan.
- Two written letters of reference.
- Registering with the Family Care Safety Registry

A Child Care Consultant visits the home provider and shares information about providing child care.

OTHER TYPES OF CARE

Nanny or Inhome Provider An individual willing to provide care in your home or an agency providing this services to families. These is no state license or regulation for persons seeking this type of employment.

Summer Day Camps A program operated from June to August providing a summer recreational program for children no younger than 5 years of age and have attended kindergarten to 12 years of age. These programs are not required to be licensed.

Mother's Day Out Programs that are open one or two days a week. Often operated by churches and are not licensed.

Unlicensed Child Care Center Programs exempt from any regulation or inspection are: school systems, business for the convenience of customers, religious preschools for 4 and 5 year olds, or vacation bible schools.

ACCREDITED CENTERS & HOMES

Programs that voluntarily become accredited usually have a strong interest in quality. Accredited programs are not necessarily better than those that have not applied for or received accreditation. However, programs that have applied for and received accreditation have met standards that exceed licensing rules.

ODD HOUR & BACKUP CARE

Family and friends are often the answer for evening and third shifts. Although few centers offer odd hour care, more family child care homes are extending their hours to meet the needs of working families. Whether you choose kith or kin, center or family child care home, also arrange a back up plan. Back up options may include: flexible work schedules, work-at-home policy, drop in centers, or nanny services.

Never assume that a license or a referral means that a program meets the standards of high quality. Observe closely and judge for yourself.

In addition to this Parent Guide, please print the following Guidance and Information topics to use during your search for quality child care:

- Questions to ask a Family Child Care Provider
- Questions to ask a Child Care Center

CDCA is dedicated to quality customer service. We value your feedback. Please contact us.



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Child Care Aware Quality Assured

CDCA reserves the right, in its sole and absolute discretion, to make an independent decision regarding the listing, or excluding, of any provider with the Resource and Referral Service. Complaints about services regarding child care will be referred to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Bureau of Child Care or the Missouri Department of Social Services as deemed necessary. An equal opportunity/affirmative action employer, services provided on a non-discriminatory basis. Funding provided by the Missouri Department of Social Services, Children's Division, Early Childhood and Prevention Services Section, in conjunction with the Department of Health and Senior Services Bureau of Child Care. A United Way Member Agency.