Quality Child Care... Priceless!

Parents and Providers Partnering for Quality Care

Project CHILD
www.rlc.edu/projectchild
Develop Your Child Care Plan

Since choosing child care is such an important decision for you, give yourself plenty of time to look around and develop a plan for you and your child. If you need child care right away, consider making temporary child care arrangements to allow yourself more time to visit programs and choose carefully.

The first step in developing your child care plan is to make a list of practical considerations that will influence your choice. Include issues like location, hours of operation, holiday and vacation policies and your family’s budget. Begin your search when you are clear about your family’s needs and your own needs, but most importantly, your child’s needs.

The next step is to call your local child care resource and referral program, where counselors can give you initial answers to your practical questions. After that, call individual providers and ask about hours and whether there are vacancies or a waiting list.

You may want to ask center directors:
• how children in the center are divided by age;
• the number of children cared for by each caregiver;
• the total group size;
• what procedures are necessary for enrolling your child.

From family child care providers, you will want to know:
• the ages of the other children in care;
• the total number of infants and children.

Sometimes you will be able to get fee information over the telephone, but sometimes you will not. After this type of telephone screening, decide which child care programs you want to visit to see for yourself.

Visiting Child Care Centers

Make appointments with the child care centers you decide to visit so that you can meet with the director(s). While visiting the center, plan to spend the morning in the room where your child will be and talk to the specific teachers who will be caring for your child. Spend enough hours at the center to see several different activities. As you visit, use the checklists included in this guide to help you evaluate the program. Plan to make a drop-in visit at another time as well, and take your child along with you on the second visit.
Visiting Family Child Care Homes

You may want to schedule your first appointment with the caregiver at a time when children are not present. This way, the provider can spend time with you to answer all your questions without taking her attention away from the children. After seeing the family child care home and talking with the provider, arrange to make a visit at a later time. Schedule your visit at a time of day when you will be able to best observe the interactions between the caregiver and the children. Very often, a morning visit will give you an idea of the types of activities available and the relationship between the provider and the children.

Initiating Your New Child Care Plan

Once you have selected a child care arrangement, prepare yourself and your child to begin child care. During the first few weeks, discuss the transition with your child and the caregiver. Arrange several short visits, if possible, before you leave your child all day. The first good-byes can be difficult for you and your child, but experienced caregivers know how to help both children and parents through this transition.

Parent Responsibility and Supervision of Child Care

Remember, it is up to you to continue to monitor the child care program you have chosen and to talk with your child’s caregivers about how your child is getting along. Caregivers need your support and appreciation for their good work and children need their parents to consistently evaluate their child care arrangement.

- Stay as close as you can to your arrival and pick-up times. If you are going to be late, call and make the necessary arrangements. This is a courtesy to your provider and it will make your child feel more secure.
- Get to know other parents whose children are being cared for at your child’s center or family child care home. Talk to them about their experiences.
- Ask questions if something happens that you don’t understand.
- Drop in frequently and participate in daily activities.
- Ask your child what he or she does during the day. Find out how he or she interacts with the caregiver. Listen carefully to what your child says.
- Spend a few minutes each day to talk with the caregiver about your child.

You are a major part of the world of your child and sharing the parenting role isn’t easy...

But, children need healthy bonds with adults and caregivers in order to grow. Choose a child care setting that is warm and nurturing and develop a partnership with the caregiver. It’s a priceless gift you give to your child.

If you are looking for quality child care in your area, give Project CHILD a call. Referral specialists are available to assist you in the process and give you the information you need to help you in your search. Call today.

1-800-362-7257
Child Care Choices for Parents

Finding child care for your child is one of the most important choices you will ever make as a parent or guardian. Selecting a caregiver for your child means choosing someone you trust who will nurture and attend to your child’s needs. Choosing child care is a very individual decision for you and your family and it should reflect your values and expectations. The more you know about a child care program, the better able you will be to choose child care where you will feel comfortable and where your child will thrive. Project CHILD provides child care referral information to parents in a professional manner, respecting the clientele served. (A modest fee for service may be assessed, based upon family size and income according to the guidelines set by the State of Illinois.)

Referral specialists at Project CHILD are ready to explain your child care options. They can refer you to child care centers, family child care homes, preschools or school age programs. Project CHILD does not recommend child care providers and cannot assure the quality of any child care provider referred in this process. However, Project CHILD provides resources to help ensure that providers meet the minimum licensing requirements. By offering training and technical assistance, caregivers are given the tools to provide high quality responsive child care. Ask your provider what training and/or education she has completed. Many child care providers take pride in being knowledgeable about child development. They can be a resource to you in understanding the needs of your child and a partner in helping your child succeed.

About Child Care Centers

Child care centers provide full or part-time child care in a group setting with planned activities. Most often licensed by the state, they must meet minimal health, safety and staffing requirements. In Illinois, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is the licensing agency for all child care programs. State standards for child care centers help protect children from serious harm, such as fire, accidents, child abuse or outbreaks of infectious disease. Children are grouped together by age, with activities planned especially for that age level. Each classroom has materials and activities which support a planned curriculum.

There is usually a range of experience and education among the staff. All staff who have contact with the children are subject to a background check for criminal activity. Centers provide substitutes during staff absences or vacations.

### Illinois Child Care Center Regulations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Maximum group size</th>
<th>Child-to-Staff Ratio</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6 weeks to 15 months</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4 to 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 months to 2 years</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>5 to 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 to 3 years</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8 to 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 &amp; 4 years</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10 to 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 years &amp; kindergarten</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20 to 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Grade and older</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>20 to 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

About Family Child Care Homes

Family child care is provided for children in the home of the caregiver. Usually, family child care providers are parents themselves. In Illinois, family child care providers who care for more than three children, including their own, are required to be licensed by DCFS. Minimum licensing requirements include a criminal history clearance and training in CPR and First Aid. In addition to that, providers are required to get 15 hours of training annually. Licensors make an initial inspection and monitor annually. They also visit licensed homes when a complaint has been made about the facility. The family child care provider may be licensed for up to eight children under 12 years of age, with no more than 5 children under the age of 5 years, and no more than 3 children under the age of 24 months. A provider with a qualified assistant could be licensed for 12 to 16 children.

Family child care offers a blending of ages. Each child has the opportunity to relate to a few other children of different ages - some younger and some older. A family child care provider may often times be in your neighborhood and may be able to make flexible arrangements. A few providers are available to care for children whose parents work at night or on weekends when centers are not usually open.
School-Age Child Care

School-age programs offer child care before and after school, and for holidays, snow days, and summer vacation. The facility types can include child care centers, elementary schools, community centers, family child care homes, parks and playgrounds. Quality school-age programs help children grow socially, emotionally and physically. Look for programs that have good staff-to-child ratios that allow for individual attention and help children build strong relationships with caring adults.

Preschools

Preschools offer group educational programs primarily for 3 to 5 year old children. Class sessions are usually part day on specified days of the week. Preschools may choose to be licensed by DCFS under the same regulations as child care centers, but in the state of Illinois, licensing is not required. Preschools typically operate on the same calendar as local school programs and do not operate during school holidays, vacations, snow days or summer months. Headstart is a federally funded preschool program for families who meet income requirements. In Illinois, Pre-K and Preschool for All programs have scheduled screenings to see if children qualify for enrollment.

License Exempt

If the family child care provider cares for 3 or fewer children (including her own), or the children from one family, the provider is not required to be licensed. A license exempt family child care provider must be registered with Project CHILD in order to be referred by the organization. Other license exempt situations may include: in-home care, relative care, or some church and/or educational sponsored child care programs.

Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

The State of Illinois offers child care assistance to families who are income eligible. You may be eligible for financial assistance if:

- You are working
- You are a TANF client with Public Aid and your RSP (Responsibility and Service Plan) assigns you to a training or education program
- You are attending high school or completing your GED, taking vocational or occupational classes, or taking classes towards a 2 or 4 year degree. If attending classes, you may have to meet a minimum work requirement.
- You are a two parent household and both parents are working or attending approved classes.

Child care assistance is determined by family size and income. To request an application or more information on eligibility guidelines contact:

Project CHILD
PO Box 827
Mt. Vernon, IL 62864
1-800-362-7257

www.rlc.edu/projectchild
Checklist

THE CAREGIVER

q The provider allows drop in visits.
q The caregiver appears to be warm, friendly, calm and loving, and seems to enjoy children.
q The provider understands what children can and want to do at different stages of growth. The provider encourages and understands child development.
q Children are allowed to make choices.
q The provider talks with the children and encourages them to express themselves through words and creative activities.
q The provider holds and touches the children in a caring manner and responds to an infant’s cries to be fed, changed, or held.
q The caregiver handles conflicts without losing patience or displaying anger. Children are encouraged to resolve conflicts between themselves in an acceptable manner.
q The provider sets limits in a way that does not punish or shame children, and has policies for discipline, toilet training and feeding that are acceptable to you.
q The provider uses a positive reinforcement approach when disciplining and guiding children.
q The provider has previous experience or training in working with children at different stages.
q The provider is someone who listens to what you want for your child and asks questions about how you do things.
q The provider has explained about the possibility of different caregivers for your child if care crosses different shifts.
q Your child responds well to the provider. Each child receives individual attention.
q You can expect the same person to care for your child for the next year.
q The provider is flexible and understanding enough to work with the various moods of the children.
q The educational equipment and surroundings reflect ethnic and cultural diversity.
q The cribs, high chairs and other equipment are safe, suitable and in good condition.
q There is a place for the child if he/she chooses to be alone.
q There is enough space indoors and outdoors so all the children can move freely and safely, and different kinds of space are available for quiet play.
q The outdoor space is free of waste, protected from traffic and safe for all ages to play.
q There is a place for a child's own belongings.
q There is a proper sleeping place for nap time.
q There are first aid supplies and fire extinguishers.
q The provider is trained in CPR and first aid.
q Bathroom and diapering areas are separate and sanitized. There is water nearby for hand washing.
q The kitchen is clean and safe.
q The meals and snacks are fresh, nutritious and appealing.

THE SPACE

q An up-to-date license is posted.
q The environment is attractive, clean and well-lit.
q The play area is orderly enough to foster constructive play but not so orderly to be restrictive.
q There is a variety of equipment and materials to help children learn and grow mentally & physically.
q Children can reach materials and supplies without asking for adult assistance.
q The educational equipment and surroundings reflect ethnic and cultural diversity.
q The cribs, high chairs and other equipment are safe, suitable and in good condition.
q There is a place for the child if he/she chooses to be alone.
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q The meals and snacks are fresh, nutritious and appealing.

THE PROGRAM

q There is time for children to work as a group.
q There is time to play alone and also to interact with friends.
q The teacher/provider has described what a typical day's schedule might be like for your child.
q The schedule shows active and quiet times throughout the day.
q The cost is within your budget, and what the fee includes is clearly explained.
q The values of the program are compatible with your values.
q Parents are involved in the program.
q The educational program and philosophy are clearly stated.
q The hours are suitable for your needs.
q How children may be transported has been discussed.
q The group sizes and child-to-staff ratio are acceptable.
Child Care Nurse Consultant: Promoting Safe and Healthy Child Care

The Child Care Nurse Consultant Program is available to help expand the knowledge of health issues among child care providers, parents and children. The consultant works toward creating healthy child care environments by providing health expertise, and also by linking families and child care providers to local health departments, primary health care centers, and other health/social service agencies.

The Child Care Nurse Consultant provides training and technical assistance on health related issues to providers, parents and children. A wide variety of easy-to-learn topics is covered in these trainings. New ideas and suggestions are always welcome.

Parent/Provider Topics
- Hand Washing/Universal Precautions
- Nutrition for Children
- Safety at Child Care Centers or Homes
- Health and Safety Policies
- SIDS
- Car Seat Safety
- General Health for Children

Children’s Topics
- Recognizing Poisons
- Healthy Lifestyles
- Dental Health
- Hand Washing for Kids

Additional Training
The Child Care Nurse Consultant Program is designed to serve the community and provides multiple services on an “as needed basis”. The Nurse Consultant can clarify state, local and licensing policies regarding health and safety issues. The Nurse Consultant also provides:

- Child Care Staff Training
- Parent and Child Health Education
- Consultations with child care providers by telephone and on-site visits
- Assessing the health and safety practices of child care staff
- Assistance in developing health and safety policies and procedures for child care facilities
- Promotion of quality child care in the community

This program is made possible through the collaboration of Project CHILD, the Lawrence County Health Department and the IDHS division of Community Health and Prevention.

800-362-7257
How You Can Support Your Child’s Development

Age 0-6 Months
You can expect your child to:
• Make gurgling, babbling, cooing sounds
• Respond to voices
• Enjoy interacting with others
• Smile in response to a smile from others
• React to emotions of others
• Respond to own name
• Explore with hands and mouth
• Support own head for more than a moment
• Roll from stomach to back and back to stomach
• Use gestures and expressions to communicate wants and needs

Things you can do to support development
• Hug your baby often to help them feel loved and safe
• Talk or sing to your baby while doing everyday things like dressing, bathing, feeding and playing
• Talk face-to-face and use their name often
• Play on the floor with your baby
• Read books to your baby every day
• Make sure that other caregivers form loving and comforting relationships with your child
• Make scheduled well baby visits to your baby’s doctor and make sure they have all other shots

Age 6-12 Months
You can expect your child to:
• Prefer mother or regular caregiver to all others
• Be shy with strangers and cry when parents leave
• Respond to simple verbal requests
• Look at correct picture when the image is named
• Understand names of objects
• Imitate gestures; tries to imitate words
• Use single words or gestures
• Repeat sounds or gestures for attention
• Find objects easily hidden while they watch
• Creep on hands and knees
• Walk holding furniture or independently
• Feed self with fingers

Things you can do to support development
• Continue to hold your baby often and talk about everyday activities
• Read books to your baby every day
• Encourage your baby to imitate gestures by playing games like peek-a-boo and pat-a-cake
• Point out names of things in picture books and ask your baby to point to them
• Provide a safe place for your baby to crawl
• Introduce your baby to other children and adults
• Continue doctor visits and shots

Age 12-24 Months
You can expect your child to:
• Begin to show defiant behavior
• Show more independence but has periods of separation anxiety
• Begin make-believe play
• Recognize names of familiar people, objects and body parts
• Use 2-5 words and gestures to communicate
• Say several single words by 15 months; use two to four word sentences by age 2
• Seek out and enjoy other children
• Climb onto and down from furniture unassisted
• Begin to run

Things you can do to support development
• Use words to describe objects and people
• Respond to and initiate your child’s pretend play
• Help your child use words to describe emotions and express feelings
• Find time for your child to interact with other children in safe, supervised settings
• Try to have family meals, naps and bedtime at the same time every day
• Continue shots and health check-ups
• Keep holding and hugging your child and read with your child every day

Age 2-3 Years
You can expect your child to:
• Express affection openly
• Separate easily from parents
• Make mechanical toys work
• Identify common objects and pictures
• Combine several words together to express thoughts, feelings and wants
• Take short turns in simple games
• Understand the meaning of “mine” and “his/hers”
• Walk up and down stairs alternating feet
• Pedal a tricycle
• Turn book pages one at a time
• Hold a pencil in writing position

Things you can do to support development
• Read with your child every day
• Read books and magazines in front of them so they see that you value reading
• Give your child lots of writing and coloring materials (crayons, pencils, paper, etc.)
• Listen to your child and answer his/her questions
• Give your child riding toys, building toys and a climbing structure in a safe and supervised setting
• Make sure your child has time to play with other children and supervise their play to help them learn to take turns and cooperate
• Continue shots and health check-ups, also dental visits
• Hug your child often and talk about everyday people, places and things

**Age 4-5 Years**
You can expect your child to:
• Sometimes be demanding, sometimes eagerly cooperative
• Want to be like their friends
• Agree to rules and want others to follow rules
• Count 10 or more objects and name four colors
• Recall part of a story
• Speak sentences of more than five words
• Stand on one foot for 10 seconds or longer
• Hop, somersault
• Print some letters
• Dress and undress without assistance
• Use fork, spoon and sometimes a knife

**Things you can do to support development**
• Hug your child often and read together every day
• Have longer conversations with him/her; use words that match his/her growing vocabulary
• Set and enforce limits and explain why there are rules
• Provide different kinds of toys, materials and games that spark creativity
• Provide plenty of opportunity for your child to play with other children in safe, supervised settings
• Provide safe space where he/she can run, jump and exercise with adult supervision
• Continue shots, health check-ups, and dental visits

**Age 6-8 Years**
You can expect your child to:
• Want to be liked by other children and place importance on friends
• Have a slow down in his/her growth rate
• Have an understanding of right and wrong and develop a conscience
• Experience small muscle development increase and coordination; better able to tie own shoes, use writing materials, play musical instruments and use eating utensils
• Learn to read and write
• Understand and be concerned about how others feel
• Increase his/her vocabulary and use of language
• Enjoy fantasy play and make-believe

**Things you can do to support development**
• Continue to hug your child and compliment him/her for doing things well
• Allow access to books; continue to read together
• Provide writing materials, art supplies and music; share his/her enthusiasm for creative interests
• Give your child more responsibility; ask for help with simple household chores and be sure he/she follows through
• Provide opportunities to experience a variety of physical activities that help develop large muscles such as: running, riding a bike, dancing or playing sports
• Talk to your child about things he/she likes and about what he/she likes to do
• Continue regular health and dental check-ups

**Age 9-11 Years**
You can expect your child to:
• Place importance on friends, join clubs or form groups of best friends with similar interests
• Experience peer pressure; show interest in conforming or belonging
• Be able to read and write, and have an interest in fantasy stories and fiction
• Physically mature; girls maturing earlier than boys
• Develop special interests in hobbies, sports, creative activities
• Use language that is more adult-like
• Want independence from family; test limits and rules

**Things you can do to support development**
• Continue to show affection for your child and talk about his/her interests and activities
• Give him/her more complex responsibilities that require follow through; reward a job completed well
• Encourage him/her to join groups and clubs that offer opportunities to practice skills or explore new interests
• Take an interest in his/her friends and get to know their families
• Make your expectations clear and, when discipline is necessary, be consistent and fair
• Provide for quiet time and space for homework or just for being alone
• Continue regular health and dental check-ups

This information has been provided by the American Academy of Pediatrics. To learn more about healthy child development, visit www.aap.org.
Don’t Forget Play!

Play is universal. Kids need to play. Playtime is more than entertainment for children. Experts consider play to be a child’s work. It is the most constructive pastime there is for a child. Play is the way that children learn about themselves, others and the world around them. It is an important consideration when choosing where to place your kids for child care. Play promotes physical, social and emotional development in children. It has an undeniable influence on every aspect of a healthy, growing child.

• Active play contributes to a child’s physical development as they reach, crawl, walk, run, climb, jump, throw, catch and balance.
• Fine motor skills develop when children handle and manipulate toys.
• Play encourages mental skills, like problem solving, and discovering cause and effect.
• Language skills increase as children interact with others.
• Social interaction occurs when children learn to follow directions, cooperate, take turns, and obey rules and share.
• Emotional skills surface as children bond with others and work through feelings.
• Self esteem is enhanced when children achieve goals and develop endurance.
• Creativity and imagination become building blocks for group play.

Because play is so important, there are things you should look for when you consider a child care program for your child:
• There is a safe play environment large enough for the group.
• There are enough play toys and equipment for everyone.
• The daily routine promotes and provides time for unstructured play.
• The staff sets a good example by promoting and participating in play.

Research also shows that children who play regularly with their parents enjoy the greatest developmental benefits. So take some time every day to watch your child play. Be creative and offer new ways to play. Never forget that most important of all, play is fun! So, go out and have some fun together today.

This information has been provided by the Toy Industry Foundation, Inc. For additional information and resources on play, toy safety, and recalls, visit www.toyassociation.org
Caregiver Connections: Supporting Social and Emotional Development in child care settings

Social-emotional development involves the ability to form close relationships and to experience, control and express emotions. When children feel good about themselves, have positive relationships with others, and know how to control their emotions, they are more likely to:

- Be better at conflict resolution
- Be more empathetic and less aggressive
- Be able to focus and learn
- Express their feelings
- Develop self-esteem and confidence
- Develop attachment
- Cope better in group settings

Secure attachment establishes the basis on which the child will form relationships with others; his/her sense of security about exploring the world; his/her resilience to stress; his/her ability to balance his/her emotions, make sense of his/her life, and create meaningful interpersonal relationships in the future.

Having a healthy self-esteem and the ability to trust others are the most valuable, lasting gifts we can give the children in our lives. You support your child’s social-emotional development by:

- Being responsive - respond promptly to a child’s needs with warmth and respect.
- Role modeling - model appropriate behaviors, while interacting with others in warm and kind ways.
- Acknowledging and identifying children’s feelings - children need labels for their feelings and positive ways to deal with them.
- Recognizing and responding to positive behavior.
- Encouraging emotional self-control.

Topics of concern about challenging childhood behaviors might include:

- Difficulty listening or cooperating
- Biting or hitting
- Eating or sleeping problems
- Over-activity
- Shyness, inability to play with others
- Anxiety
- Tantrums or excessive crying
- Aggression
- Delays in development

The Mental Health Consultant of Project CHILD offers a wide range of services and supports at no cost to child care professionals and parents of children in child care settings. Information on screening resources, new ideas to help children develop appropriate social and emotional skills, and support and training to equip families and caregivers is all available with just a phone call.

800-362-7257

This program is made possible through the collaboration of Project CHILD, Southeastern Illinois Counseling Centers, Inc. and IDHS.
Project CHILD is a resource and referral agency committed to advancing the quality, affordability and accessibility of child care. As part of the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, Project CHILD provides services to parents and providers in the counties of: Clay, Crawford, Edwards, Effingham, Fayette, Jasper, Jefferson, Lawrence, Marion, Richland, Wabash and Wayne.

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