



# SELECTING QUALITY CHILD CARE

*in a centre-based program*

a resource package for  
parents & caregivers



## **introduction**

Quality child care is based on co-operation and trust between parents, caregivers and children. When this relationship develops, children are likely to be well adjusted and have a strong self-worth.

However, choosing child care can be confusing and overwhelming. This package helps you identify your family's needs and select a quality child care program that is right for you and your child.

## **what you will find in this package:**

1. What Are My Options?: The Two Types of Centre-Based Child Care
2. What Are My Child Care Needs?
3. Finding Child Care: The Child Care Checklist
4. Getting Started: Helping Your Child Adjust to Child Care

# 1. what are my options?

## the two types of centre-based child care

Child care centres are regulated facilities that provide daily care for children. Child care centres in Ontario are licensed under the Day Nurseries Act. This Act sets standards for staff qualifications, safety, fire, health, nutrition, behaviour management, number of children, staff to children ratios, age-appropriate programming and equipment requirements.

There are two types of licensed child care:

### a. licensed full-day child care centres

Child care centres offer full-day child care, usually for 12 months of the year. Some centres also offer part-time care, nursery school programs, temporary care services, as well as school-age or day camp programs. These centres must be licensed, whether they are operated by a private corporation or a non-profit, incorporated board of directors.

If you are seeking child care for infants or toddlers, you should be prepared to pay more than you would normally pay for a pre-school child. This is because more staff are required to care for a group of young children than a group of older children (*see staff to children ratios below*).

If your child is ill or on vacation and cannot attend his or her child care centre, you may have to pay for those days the child is away because your child's place is still reserved in the centre. However, fee payment arrangements, illness and vacation policies vary from centre to centre.

### b. licensed nursery school programs

Nursery schools are licensed, part-day programs for more than five children between 18 months and 5 years of age. They usually only run during the school year. In many co-operative nursery schools, parents are expected to be involved in the program on a rotating basis. Parents who choose not to participate may have to pay a higher fee.

## staff to children ratios

The chart below shows you the number of staff required to supervise each age group, under Provincial legislation.

Age Group	Staff to Children Ratio	Maximum Group Size
Infants Newborn to 18 months	1:3 (or 3:10) staff to children	10 infants per room
Toddlers 18 months to 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ years	1:5 staff to children	15 children per room
Preschoolers 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 5 years	1:8 staff to children 1:10 staff to children, ages 3 years, 8 months to 5 years 1:12 staff to children, age 5 years	24 children per room
School-age children 6 to 10 years old	1:15 staff to children	30 children per room

## 2. what are my child care needs?

Before you look for a child care centre, you must decide what your specific child care needs are. The following questions will help you focus on the type of child care you require.

1. During which hours do you need child care? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Which days of the week do you need child care? \_\_\_\_\_
3. How will you transport your child to and from child care? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How much can you afford to pay for child care each month? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you need government subsidy to assist with child care fees?  Yes  No
6. Does your child have any special needs?  
 Physical  Emotional  Social  Allergies  
 Dietary  Medical  Language  Other \_\_\_\_\_
7. How many children require child care? \_\_\_\_\_
8. What ages are your children? \_\_\_\_\_
9. Do your children need to be in the same location?  Yes  No
10. Do you prefer child care in a:  Centre  Licensed home  Unlicensed home
11. Do you prefer child care near your:  Home  Work  Child's school

## 3. finding quality child care:

### the child care checklist

Now the search begins. Once you have identified your child care needs, decide which centre or program is best for your family. The checklist on the following page is a list of questions you should keep in mind when visiting a child care centre.

Finding good child care takes time, patience and planning. We suggest you visit many child care programs and compare. Give yourself plenty of time to look for child care. Remember that you are buying a service. When it comes to your children, there are no bargains, only options. For more information call the York Region KidsLine. Your local Ontario Early Years Centre may also be able to help you.

1. Centre/program name: \_\_\_\_\_
2. Contact name: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Hours of operation: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Fees: \_\_\_\_\_

## the child care centre

- Were you greeted upon arrival?
- Were you given a tour of the entire program?
- Did the children seem happy? Were they playing, interacting and exploring materials and equipment?
- Is the child care licence clearly posted? Ask the centre supervisor to explain any conditions or provisions on the licence.
- What are the hours of operation?
- If your child is ill and cannot attend, do you have to pay for that day?
- What is the centre's policy on child illness?
- Is there a place where a child can be isolated and supervised if they feel ill?
- Do staff have Early Childhood Education qualifications?
- What supplies are parents responsible for?
- How much notice is required if you wish to discontinue child care?
- What are the policies/guidelines in case of emergencies?
- Who is allowed to pick up your child from the centre and how is this handled?
- What is the centre's policy on unacceptable behaviour?
- Are visitors welcome and how are they identified?
- Does the centre have a mission statement?
- Is there a written daily program showing what the children will be doing?
- Do the children go on field trips?
- How are children transported on field trips?
- Did the supervisor explain the staff to children ratios for your child's classroom?
- Are special needs children included in activities?
- Are parents able to drop-in for a visit?
- Can parents get involved and how?
- Is there a Parent Advisory Board and are parents welcome to join?
- What kind of daily communication is there for parents?
- Is there a place for each child's personal belongings?
- Are the children supervised at all times?
- Are criminal reference checks performed and kept up-to-date on all staff and volunteers?

## the classroom setting

- Is the classroom clean, bright, and well ventilated?
- Is the classroom warm and welcoming?
- Is it a child-friendly environment?
- Is the sleeping area clean and comfortable?
- Is the noise level comfortable to you?
- Are there a wide variety of age-appropriate toys and activities available?
- Are a variety of activity centres available, (i.e. painting, crafts, drama, water and sand play)?
- Do the children go outside daily?
- Is outdoor play supervised?
- Is the outdoor play area fenced in?
- Do teachers and children interact during outdoor play?

## health and safety

- Are all the toys and equipment cleaned on a regular basis?
- Is the equipment safe and in good condition?
- Does equipment meet current health and safety standards?
- Is the equipment and furniture child-sized?
- Are medications locked and out of children's reach?
- Are dangerous objects out of children's reach?
- Do staff disinfect the diapering area and wash their hands after each use?
- Do children wash their hands after toileting and before eating?
- Do toilets offer privacy but allow adequate supervision?
- Does each child have his or her own clearly labelled cot?
- Are the cots set up prior to sleep time?
- How are the sheets and blankets cleaned?
- Can children bring their own toys or blankets from home?
- Where is the First Aid kit?
- Are staff trained in First Aid and CPR?
- Are emergency procedures posted?
- Are monthly fire drills performed?

## meals

- Is the menu plan posted and followed?
- Are children provided with two healthy snacks and a nutritious lunch each day?
- Do the meals and snacks follow Canada's Food Guide?
- Is the food cooked on site or is it catered?
- Do staff eat with the children?
- Are food allergies posted?
- What happens if a child has an allergic reaction?
- What happens if a child is unable to eat the planned meals or snacks?
- What is the centre's policy on religious or cultural diet restrictions?

## centre administration

- Is there a space available for your child?
- If there is no space currently available, is there a wait list?
- What are the centre's fees?
- Is there a discount if two or more children are registered?
- Are receipts issued for tax purposes?
- Is there an additional registration charge?
- What is the payment schedule (monthly, bi-weekly, weekly)?
- What is the vacation policy?

## 4. getting started:

### helping your child adjust to child care

Once you have selected a child care program, allow your child some time to adjust. Each child is unique and will adjust to their new surroundings at their own pace. Do not compare your child to others. Your child's adjustment period is affected by his or her age, temperament, the length of time he or she has spent with you at home and their individual family situation.

When you take your child to the child care program, it is important that you say goodbye to them before leaving. Sneaking out of the centre without saying goodbye may leave a child feeling abandoned. Reassure your child that they will have fun and that you will return at the end of the day to pick them up.

Children commonly become sick when first exposed to a large group of children. If your child becomes ill at a centre, you must pick him or her up immediately. We recommend that you plan for alternative child care in the event of illness.

### why not start part time?

If possible, start your child in a program on a part-time basis. This allows you to spend some time with your child in the program during this adjustment phase. It is important to maintain a positive relationship with the care providers for the duration of your child's care. Ask for daily feedback on how your child is doing.

### financial assistance

Financial assistance in licensed centre-based child care may be available to eligible families with an assessed financial need. For more information, call the York Region KidsLine at 1-888-703-KIDS (5437), ext. 3 or in Newmarket 905-830-9487, ext. 3.

## conclusion

Always remember that successful child care is a three-way partnership between the parent, caregiver and the child. Communication is a must.

- Ask questions
- Raise concerns
- Listen to your child
- Express your thanks
- Be open and honest

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## notes

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For more information about selecting child care  
and child care fee assistance  
call the York Region KidsLine at  
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**in Newmarket 905-830-9487**