



SELECTING QUALITY CHILD CARE

in a home-based program

a resource package for
parents & caregivers



introduction

Quality child care is built 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 Home-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 home-based child care

Home-based child care providers care for children in their own home. They may be licensed through an organized child care agency or they may provide child care on a less formal basis.

Some of the benefits of home-based child care include:

- a family-like setting
- siblings can be cared for together, often in your own community
- hours may be more flexible than in centre-based care and can be adapted to suit individual needs (part time or extended hours may be available)
- programming may be less structured
- care providers may have access to training and community support groups

There are two types of home-based child care:

a. Licensed Home-Based Child Care

Home-based child care agencies recruit, screen, approve and supervise individuals who provide child care in their own homes for children from infancy to 12 years of age. The agency may have a number of homes within its organization. Agency staff act as support persons to both the child care providers and the parents. Homes are visited regularly and are subject to spot checks. The agency is licensed and responsible for ensuring that each home meets the standards of the Day Nurseries Act. This Act sets provincial child care standards for health, fire, safety, nutrition, program and staffing requirements.

The number and ages of children in home-based child care are regulated. A provider may care for up to five children, including her own, where her children are under the age of six years. However, the provider may still care for five children, in addition to her own, by caring for some school-aged children.

Hours of care are usually flexible, depending on a parent's work or school schedule. If your child is ill or on vacation and cannot attend child care, you may have to pay for those days the child is away because your child's place is still reserved in the provider's home. Income tax receipts are provided. Fee payment arrangements, illness and vacation policies may vary among home-based child care agencies.

b. Unlicensed Home-Based Child Care

A relative, a friend or another person may provide you with informal, unlicensed child care. Legally, unlicensed caregivers can care for a maximum of five children in addition to their own. Informal child care is usually flexible with hours and days of care, and care may continue to be provided if your child is ill. Parents should carefully inspect the provider's home and conduct interviews with the provider.

Informal providers may or may not offer income tax receipts. Fee payment arrangements and illness or vacation policies may vary from provider to provider.

2. what are my child care needs?

Before you look for child care, 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
 Dietary Medical Language
 Allergies 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, you must decide which child care provider is best for your family. The checklist on the following page is a list of questions you should keep in mind when visiting a home-based child care provider.

Finding good child care takes time, patience and planning. We suggest you visit many providers 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. Provider name: _____
2. Agency name: _____
3. Telephone number: _____
4. Hours of operation: _____
5. Fees: _____

the child care provider

- Were you greeted upon arrival?
- Is the provider qualified and/or experienced?
- Is the provider affectionate and responsive to the needs of your child?
- Is the provider calm, caring, and enthusiastic when speaking directly to your child (never yelling)?
- Are the children ever left alone?
- Do the provider's child-rearing beliefs and behaviour management techniques match yours?
- Is the provider sensitive to your views and values of child rearing?
- How is information shared between the provider and the parent?
- Is back-up available if the provider becomes ill?
- Is the provider certified in CPR, First Aid?
- Has a criminal reference check been done on the provider?

Does the provider:

- Invite you to visit at any time?
- Display a positive attitude toward bottle weaning, diapering, toilet training, discipline and special needs of children?
- Offer praise and positive reinforcement to each child?
- Encourage children to express their thoughts and feelings and listen with interest and respect?
- Offer support and guidance, appropriate for the developmental abilities of each child?
- Encourage children to play independently and in group activities?
- Help children gain an awareness of other people's feelings and how their actions affect others?
- Interact with children at their height level (e.g. on a chair or crouching on the floor)?
- Take time every day for meaningful conversation with each child?
- Read to children at least once a day and make books accessible to them?
- Seek information about the family's cultural traditions and use the information in planning activities?
- Take advantage of and build on the many natural learning experiences associated with daily life in a home?
- Have any training or use support groups (e.g. play groups, library, AOK programs, Ontario Early Years Centres)?
- Give you information about your child's development, daily activities, mood, diet and sleep?
- Have social support of friends, family, other providers and/or community organizations?
- Have some way of keeping family/child information current and accessible?

To find out more about a care provider, give him or her a situation and observe how he or she would react. For example, "A child bites another child. What do you do?"

the child care provider's home

- Does the home offer a clean, safe, secure and stimulating environment?
- Is the room set up to allow easy supervision?
- Is there a flexible, yet predictable daily routine?
- Are children happy and playing, not bored, bickering or fighting over toys?
- Are there a variety of activity areas for quiet and active times, such as outdoor play, dramatic play, quiet reading, crafts, painting and blocks?

- Is children's artwork individual and displayed at the child's eye level?
- What kind of different activities are offered on a daily basis? (Watching TV should be kept to a minimum.)
- Are there a variety of activities which focus on gross motor skills, such as sliding, climbing, running, and riding?
- Does outdoor recreation include programmed activities beyond free play such as painting, water play, blowing bubbles and other creative activities?
- Do children go outdoors regularly for fresh air and exercise?
- Do the provider and children interact during outdoor play?
- Is the outdoor play area large with both sun and shade?
- What are the children's sleeping arrangements? How are children supervised when sleeping?
- Does each child have a place to store outerwear and extra clothing?
- Does the provider have pets?

health and safety

- Is the home child-proofed according to the age of the children in care?
- Are toys and equipment safe, in good condition, and cleaned and disinfected regularly?
- Are toys and equipment age-appropriate?
- Are children's paint, markers and glue non-toxic?
- Are dangerous objects, such as adult scissors, out of children's reach?
- Are children's sleeping cots or cribs, bedding and comfort toys cleaned on a regular basis?
- Is the ground beneath climbing equipment soft (e.g. sand or an approved playground surface)?
- Is the play area fenced in a way that a child cannot climb over, under or through the fence?
- Does equipment meet current safety standards?
- Are safety precautions in place, such as fire extinguishers, smoke alarms, electrical outlet covers and emergency exits?
- Are cleaning supplies and medicines stored in a locked cabinet, inaccessible to children?
- Will additional adults or children be present during lunch, after school, etc.?
- Will older children/spouse be home during the day?
- How many other children (including care provider's own) will receive care?
- Does the provider thoroughly wash their hands whenever they change a diaper, help a child to the toilet, prepare food, feed a baby or wipe a nose?
- Are runny noses attended to immediately, using a fresh tissue for each child?
- Are personal hygiene products provided?
- What is the provider's policy on administering medication?
- What is the provider's policy on accidents, injuries, and illness?
- Is smoking permitted in the house?
- Can children bring their own toys and blankets from home?
- Where is the First Aid kit?

meals

- Is a menu plan posted and followed?
- What happens if children are unable to eat what is planned?
- Are food allergies posted?
- What happens if a child has an allergic reaction?
- Do the meals and snacks follow Canada's Food Guide?

- Is food prepared, served and stored in a hygienic manner?
- Do the children and the care provider share quiet, social interaction at meal times?
- Does the provider respond calmly, in a good-natured manner, to spills and messes?
- What is the provider's policy on religious or cultural diet restrictions?

administration

- Is there a space available for your child?
- If there is no space currently available, is there a wait list?
- What are the care provider's fees?
- Is there a discount if two or more children are registered?
- Does the provider issue receipts?
- What is the payment schedule (monthly, bi-weekly, weekly)?
- What type of notice must be given if you wish to discontinue care?
- Does the provider have liability coverage?

getting started:

helping your child adjust to child care

Once you have selected a child care provider, allow your child some time to adjust. Each child is unique and will adjust to their new surroundings at their own pace, so 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 provider's home, it is important that you say goodbye to them before leaving. Sneaking out 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 provider's home, 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 home-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) or in Newmarket 905-830-9487.

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

notes

For more information about selecting child care
and child care fee assistance
call the York Region KidsLine at
1-888-703-KIDS (5437) or
in Newmarket 905-830-9487