

Dear Parents,

The quality of child care has a direct impact on your child's ability to learn, to build healthy relationships, and to become the best he or she can be. However, the important decision of where to place your child is often difficult and confusing. The Office of Child Development and Early Learning created this guide to educate and empower parents to make smart decisions when choosing a child care provider.

As a part of resource and referral services for parents, Pennsylvania has three goals to help support your decisions about early childhood programs. The goals of Pennsylvania's resource and referral services are to:

1. Educate families on the benefits of quality care
2. Match families with care and services that meet their needs
3. Develop a relationship with families in order to provide continuing service



About Certification

The state Department of Public Welfare, DPW, certifies child care providers. At least once a year, DPW inspects Child Care Centers and Group Homes; and, on a random basis, DPW inspects Family Homes that serve four to six children. DPW is also responsible for investigating complaints about child care facilities.

For more information about requirements and who is considered to be related to the child care operator, or if you have questions or concerns regarding child care, call your local Child Care Information Services, CCIS.



A Parent Guide: Types of Child Care and Defining Quality Child Care

What it means for You and Your Child.



Child Care Information Services Agency:

Types of Child Care

Child care is an important partnership between parents and child care providers. Both partners play a key role in achieving the well-being and healthy development of children.

Child Care Center

- Serves seven or more children unrelated to the child care operator.
- State Certification required, based on health and safety.
- Voluntary participation in Keystone STARS or other types of accreditation at discretion of the program.

Group Home

- Serves between seven and 12 children unrelated to the child care operator.
- State Certification required, based on health and safety.
- Voluntary participation in Keystone STARS or other types of accreditation at discretion of the program.

Family Home

- One caregiver who serves between four and six children unrelated to the caregiver.
- State Registration required, based on health and safety.
- Voluntary participation in Keystone STARS or other types of accreditation at discretion of the program.

Relative/Neighbor Care

- One caregiver who cares for one, two or three children who are not related to the caregiver and up to three additional children who are related to the caregiver.
- No state oversight. No health and safety requirements.
- Unable to participate in accrediting programs.

Defining Quality Child Care

Quality child care will offer your child a stimulating, nurturing environment which should help prepare them for school and support them reaching their full potential. Quality care environments far exceed minimum standards set by the state and provide a stimulating, loving atmosphere in which your child will thrive mentally, socially, emotionally and physically.



Characteristics of Quality

- Small group sizes and adult-to-child ratios encourage the best opportunities for a child's development.
- Caregivers or teachers who have experience and education in early childhood development.
- Opportunities for meaningful parent involvement.
- Learning materials and teaching styles that are age-appropriate and respectful of children's cultural and ethnic heritage.
- Learning opportunities that promote your child's success in school.
- Participation in accrediting programs such as Keystone STARS.

Taking the First Steps

- Talk with your child and think about what you and he or she would want from a child care program. Write down what is most important to you.
- Talk to the staff at your local Child Care Information Services, CCIS, agency.
- Think about what you can afford. Check into any child care financial assistance through the state or your employer.
- Interview caregivers on the phone. Ask about staff-to-child ratios, costs, certification, learning opportunities offered and if the provider is participating in Keystone STARS.



**Call your local
Child Care Information
Services, CCIS, or
1-877-4PA-KIDS
for more information.**