

Choosing Quality Child Care



Choosing a quality early care and education program can be challenging, but it is one of the most important decisions you will make. Knowing how to look for quality care will help you find the best child care program for your family.

Begin your child care search by contacting the Child Care Connection (CCC) office at (760) 873-5123. Child Care Connection is the state funded child care resource and referral service for Inyo County.

Free services include:

- Child care referrals to licensed family child care homes and centers
- Quality child care information
- Information regarding the subsidized child care program
- Lending library with books, videos, toys, and resource materials
- Resources to community services for families
- Information and resources about starting a child care business

1. Know Your Options

There are different types of child care settings. Some are licensed, some are not. In Inyo County licensed family child care homes are regulated by Inyo County Community Care Licensing and center-based sites are regulated by the California Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division. While licensing does not ensure quality, it does provide guidelines for health and safety. We recommend that you check the history file of a licensed home or center to obtain information on complaints or violations by calling (760) 872-1727 for licensed family child care home and (661) 644-8231.

Licensed Family Child Care is offered in a home setting. The provider can care for up to 14 children, depending on their ages and type of license that has been issued. There is a limit on the number of infants in care at one time.

Child Care Centers can be large or small and operated independently, by a church, or other types organizations. Children are often grouped by age. Staff must meet specific educational requirements and there are also required staff-to-child ratios.

Head Start and State Preschools are Title 5 licensed programs that are federally (Head Start) and State (State Preschool) funded to offer free or low cost preschool for income eligible families. Programs offer a range of part day, full day, and/or wrap services. Classrooms are staffed with one or more adults.

License-Exempt Care is provided by a nanny, friend, or relative in the caregiver's home and is not required to be licensed.

2. Conduct a Telephone Interview

To save time and energy, use the phone to narrow down your search. You may have to leave a voicemail as providers are often busy with children. When you speak with the provider or center staff, ask questions about the following:

- Openings for what you need
- Hours, vacation days, holidays
- Cost and what's included
- Number and ages of children enrolled
- Provider's education and professional experience
- Play and learning activities offered
- Guidance and discipline policies

3. Make a Visit

It is very important that you visit a home or center before making a decision. Be prepared to spend an hour or longer so you can see the daily routine and observe the interactions between the children and provider. Use the Quality Care Checklist to guide your observations and compare programs. When you visit, you should expect a warm greeting, short introductions, a brief tour, explanation of fees and policies, and an invitation to stay awhile.

4. References

Ask the provider for several references so you can talk to other parents who have used their services. You may want to ask what they liked most or least and if they would choose this home or center again.

5. Child Care Licensing

As a parent you have the right to access all public files pertaining to licensed facilities. To get a complete licensing history for family child care homes call (760) 872-1727, call Community Care Licensing at (661) 644-8231 with the provider's name and address OR facility number.

You can also complete a facility search for center-based sites online at: <http://www.cclcd.ca.gov/>
The public record contains full reports from licensing visits to the facility as well as the results of any complaints. Not all complaints or violations are equal. Some violations are minor in nature and may be easily remedied and some complaints are unsubstantiated. To help you make a decision, look for a history of complaints and/or non-compliance against a provider.

6. Preparing Your Child

When you have selected a provider or center who meets your family needs and standards for quality, you are ready to prepare your child for this important transition. Anything you can do to ease the stress of the initial separation will help your child adjust and develop trusting relationships with adults and children at the Family Child Care Home or Center. You and your provider, working as a team, can help your child successfully adjust to the new environment.

- Tell your child about child care so they are not surprised by the new arrangement.
- Visit the home or center with your child prior to leaving them.
- Let your child see you being friendly with the provider.
- Allow plenty of time in the morning to get ready.
- Bring a special blanket, stuffed animal, or picture of the family to help them feel comforted and secure.
- Give a warm and reassuring goodbye. Don't sneak out. It may seem easier to sneak away but it can make separation more difficult in the future because it's harder for your child to trust when you will go and when you will come back.
- Show an interest in what your child has done during the day.

What "Quality" Early Care Means:



LOW TEACHER TO CHILD RATIOS AND SMALL GROUP SIZES



AGE APPROPRIATE LEARNING ACTIVITIES



ENGAGING AND SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS



ACTIVITIES THAT SUPPORT PHYSICAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL GROWTH



QUALIFIED STAFF WITH PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Child Care Connection
Phone: (760) 873-5123
Monday-Friday 8:00AM-4:30PM

Inyo County Community Care
Licensing: (760) 872-1721

DSS Community Care Licensing:
(661) 644-8231

For a copy of Child Care
Connection's referral and
complaint policies, please call
(760) 760-873-5123