



Child Care Choices

When it comes to finding child care, you may feel a little overwhelmed at first. That's perfectly natural! **You have a lot to decide and several options to choose from:**

- Do you want a child care center- or family child care in a person's home?
- Do you want your child near your home - or your office?
- Do you want your child cared for with a few other children - or in a larger group setting?

Also you need to think about your child's personality and needs:

- Does your child need a predictable schedule?
- Does your child like to have his back rubbed for naps?
- Does your child thrive in open space or prefer intimate nooks?
- What kinds of people and activities make your child comfortable and happy?

Think about questions your child might ask:

- Who's going to care for me?
- Are there plenty of toys I can reach and enjoy?
- Where will I keep my "stuff"?
- Is everyone having fun?
- What will I do all day?

Click here to go to ["Your Child Deserves Loving Care"](#). More guidelines for finding the right care for your family.

We support parent choice by offering consumer education on choosing child care from available options. There are many different types of child care. Some care is licensed or regulated and some is not. Licensing does not ensure quality but it does provide guidelines for health and safety.

TYPES OF CHILD CARE

CHILD CARE CENTERS

Child care centers are licensed by the State of New Jersey. In order to be licensed a program must meet minimum health and safety, program, staffing and training requirements. Licensing does not insure quality but it does set



minimum standards that centers must maintain. See Manual of Requirements for Licensed Day Care Centers: <http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dyfs/licensing.html>

Adult/Child Ratios for Child Care Centers

Under 18 months:	1:4
18mos-2 ½ years:	1:6
2 ½ yrs.-4 years:	1:10
4 years:	1:12
5 years:	1:15
6 years:	1:18

Child care centers generally group children by age, allowing children to interact and learn with their peers. Some centers that have met rigorous standards for staff qualifications, curriculum, environment, health & safety and staff to child ratios are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children www.naeyc.org

While each center may meet the same requirements, centers can vary greatly in program content, equipment, staff development, philosophy and cost. Preschoolers are curious about how things work; they need opportunities to learn and develop through exploration and play. Please make sure to visit, ask questions and observe.

PRESCHOOLS/NURSERY SCHOOLS

Preschools/Nursery Schools are licensed as child care centers. Parents seeking part-time care may look into a preschool program in their community. Preschools tend to run on a 9-month schedule and take children from 2 ½ to 5 years old.

FAMILY CHILD CARE PROVIDERS

In New Jersey, Family Child Care providers are not required to be licensed, but may voluntarily register with the state after meeting basic health, safety, and training requirements. Family child care offers care for children in the provider's private home, often described as a home away from home. Most providers care for children of varying ages in a warm, family setting. Family Child Care homes provide opportunities to explore and learn about real-life activities such as cooking, cleaning, gardening and laundry. Family Child care providers are able to offer a more flexible schedule for working parents than a child care center. The maximum number of children in care at one time is five. In order to receive a Certificate of Registration a provider must:

- Be 18 years of age, in good health and reside in the home where the care is provided
- Provide a safe, healthy environment for children
- Receive clearance on a Child Abuse Record Information background check
- Attend an 8-hour pre-service training session
- Attend an additional 12 hours of training during the three-year registration period
- Have current CPR and First Aid certification



- Provide age-appropriate activities for the children in an interesting, stimulating environment

Child Care Resources serves as the Sponsoring Organization for over 200 Family Child Care homes in Monmouth County.

CARE IN YOUR OWN HOME

Care in your own home can consist of a relative or family friend watching your children. It can also be a nanny or au pair. A nanny is a child care provider paid for her expertise and experience and is an employee of the family for whom she works. An au pair is a young foreigner between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five who lives in the United States for up to one year as part of a cultural educational exchange program. This person could be living in your household or come on a daily basis. In the state of New Jersey, there are no official standards or regulations pertaining to in-home child care. A parent will need to decide what best fits the family's needs.

In-home providers can accommodate flexible schedules, whether part-time, evening hours, weekends, or a rotating shift.

It is important that you agree to a contract. Establish set hours, pay rate, discipline policies, and your child's routine. Allow a time to talk regularly, when children are not around, about concerns that you both might have. (Child Care Resources is limited to providing families with placement agencies for nannies or au pairs. Families often seek such care through word of mouth with co-workers, friends, relatives and faith communities.)

SCHOOL-AGE CHILD CARE (Before/After School Care)

While only parents can determine the age at which their child is responsible enough to care for himself, it is recommended that children 12 and under be supervised by adults. Many school districts offer before and after school care, usually at the school your child attends or a nearby facility. These programs may be operated by the school district, a for-profit company or a local civic organization and must be licensed by the state. Programs operated by the local school district or private schools do not have to be licensed. Check to see if your child's program is licensed and ask questions about staff qualifications and the daily plans.

Families can also turn to family child care providers in their own neighborhoods for before and after school care. These professionals work throughout the year and are usually open during school vacations and holidays.

For additional information contact the NJ School-Age Care Coalition www.njsacc.org
See Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers <http://www.state.nj.us/humanservices/dyfs/licensing.html>

SUMMER CAMPS

Working families are challenged each summer to find a quality, enriching and enjoyable program for their school-aged child. Many families combine vacation time from work, relative care, family child care and an organized summer program to ensure the child's well-being while school is out of session.

If you want to send your child to a summer camp or organized summer program, **PLAN EARLY!!** Day camp registrations usually begin in the winter and many fill up by April. Many sleep away camps accept registrations in the fall for the following summer. As with all child care arrangements, look at a variety of programs before enrolling your child.

[Click here for average rates of care.](#)

MAKE SURE YOU VISIT AND ASK QUESTIONS

Child Care Resources



Helping Families Find Child Care

You might want to visit several different child care programs before you decide which one is best for your family. Call each child care program and schedule an appointment for your visit. Once you are there, stay for at least an hour to observe activities, check the surroundings, and ask questions. Most importantly observe the caregiver's interaction and relationship with the children. A positive, loving relationship is the key indicator of quality care. Visit a second time with your child and observe his/her reaction to the environment and caregiver. Click here for a downloadable version of "[Your child deserves loving care](#)"

MAKE THE RIGHT DECISION

Use our checklist as a guide. ([click here to go to the checklist](#)). Think about what you saw at each visit, and make the best choice for your child and family. Follow your instincts. Be sure to visit every program you are considering. Visit more than once, at different hours of the day. That's the best way to see how the program works. You'll also get a better "feel" for the caregiver's style and daily routines. Remember, quality of care may vary from one program or provider to the next.

STAY INVOLVED

The work isn't over when you find good care for your child. It's important to stay involved and communicate with your caregiver on a regular basis. Even if you can't get time off from work during the day, you can still check in at drop-off and pick-up times. Ask the caregiver how things are going, and how your child is doing.

Visiting and participating in events at your child's provider sends a strong message. It tells your child and your child's caregiver that you think what your child is doing and learning is important.