

Finding Quality Child Care



A Guide for Oregon Families

Oregon's Child Care Search Engine – Connect, Educate, Navigate

What are My Choices?

How do you evaluate child care options and make the right choice? Choosing child care is one of the most important choices a parent will ever make. You know that early experiences are critical to healthy brain development and you want the best for your child. But when it comes to child care, how do you know what's best?

Finding child care takes time and effort. Some parents begin their search before the baby is born. Even if you don't plan to return to work right away, it's helpful to begin exploring options and learning what's available in your community before you need care. Call your local child care resource and referral (CCR&R) program for help finding child care; you will find a list of programs on the last page of this booklet.

So Many Choices?



Child Care Centers

Care is provided in a setting similar to a school where there are multiple classrooms and children are usually grouped by age. Most child care centers are regulated by the Oregon Child Care Division.

Family Child Care

Care is provided in a home that, generally, has been licensed by the Oregon Child Care Division to provide child care. Care for three children or fewer is exempt from regulation in Oregon.

Family, Friends and Neighbors

Care is provided by a family member, friend or neighbor. This care is rarely regulated.

Preschool

Care for children from 3 years old to the start of first grade, provided less than four hours a day with an educational curriculum. Preschool care is exempt from regulation requirements, although they may voluntarily choose to become regulated.

School Age Care

Care for school-aged children before and/or after school hours and during vacations. It may or may not be a part of a certified center that also serves children of other ages.

In-Home Care

Sometimes called “nanny care.” Families hire an individual to care for children in their own home.

Child Care Options at a Glance

	Types of Regulated Child Care in Oregon The Child Care Division (CCD) regulates care in Oregon. You can reach them at: (503) 947-1400 or 1-800-556-6616			Non Regulated Child Care
Areas to look at in a child care setting	Certified Child Care Centers	Certified Family Child Care	Registered Family Child Care	Exempt Family Child Care (Must be 18+ to be listed with DHS)
# of children permitted at any one time in child care based on CCD regulations	13+ or in a building not constructed as a single-family dwelling	Up to 16, (includes own children) a provider with 16 requires a wavier	10 (includes own children) Only 6 children under the age of 6 and 2 children under the age of 2	Up to 3, if providing for more than one family (does not include the provider's children)
Has had an on-site Health and Safety Inspection by CCD	✓	✓	✓	Must meet basic safety and health standards (self-report if listed only with DHS)
Has had a criminal background check	✓	✓	✓	✓ (if listed with DHS)
Planned activities	✓	✓		
Attendance records	✓	✓	✓	✓
Written guidance and discipline policy	✓	✓	✓	(May have policy but not required)
Daily routine/schedule	✓	✓	✓	(May have policy but not required)
Training requirements	15 hours/year	15 hours/year	8 hours/2 years	(May have training but not required)
Overview of Family Child Care Business Training		✓	✓	
Infant/Child First Aid and CPR Training	✓ (Staff who function as teachers)	✓ (Staff who function as teachers)	✓	
Food Handlers Certificate Training	✓ (Staff who handle/serve food)	✓ (Staff who handle/serve food)	✓	
Child Abuse and Neglect Training	✓	✓	✓	

Exempt Providers Listed with DHS-Direct Pay Unit (DPU) Health and Safety Standard

- 2 outdoor exits on each floor children use, safe water to drink, working smoke detectors, working telephone
- Building, toys, grounds, equipment and furniture are kept clean, sanitary and hazard free
- Firearms, ammunition, and dangerous items like medicine, drugs, poison, cleaning supplies, paint, plastic bags kept in locked cabinet out of children's reach
- Fireplace and/or wood stove protection

Why Quality Matters

Your child's early years are very important. Research indicates that 85% of a person's intellectual, emotional and cognitive ability is formed by the age of five, making the early years a vitally important time in a child's life.

Children's earliest teachers must love, respect and nurture them. Selecting a provider who connects with young children emotionally is critical. It is very important that a family selects a provider who reads to their child every day, encourages their curiosity and allows the child to explore the world around him or her.

When your child has safe, loving and stimulating child care that you can depend on, you don't have to worry while you are at work. You know that your child is getting the kind of care children need to be happy, healthy and ready for school.

Quality Indicators Program in Oregon

Parents and professionals believe the most important indicator of quality is the relationship between the care provider and an individual child. Children benefit when stable, loving care providers spend time with children. Frequent one-on-one adult-child interactions help children grow and develop language and social skills needed for success in school and life.

Oregon's quality indicators listed below are research based. When these indicators are positive, the likelihood that care is good for children is higher. These indicators provide information that parents can use to find the best arrangement for their family. The indicators are:

- Ratio of children per adult
- Education level of the caregiver
- Specialized training of the caregiver
- Teacher compensation level
- Staff retention
- Group size
- Accreditation

As part of the Quality Indicators Program, information about these quality indicators is compiled in a report. If a child care facility agrees to release their Quality Indicator Report, the local CCR&R can share it with parents so they know how the program does on each indicator and how it compares with other programs in the area. The report will also show how the child care facility lines up with national recommended standards.

Parents decide what is best for their child and family. It helps to follow the steps outlined in pages 5 and 6 of this guide. Quality indicators also provide information that helps them make this important decision.

STEPS to Finding Quality Child Care

1. Start Early

No matter what type of care you are considering, whether a child care center or care in someone else's home, finding the right child care option can take some time. Many quality providers are full.

2. Make a Call

Begin your search by calling your local experts – your local (CCR&R). Your CCR&R can give you the facts about child care and a list of child care options in your area that may meet your needs.

3. Visit and Ask Questions

Make sure you visit each child care facility you are considering. Find out about the number of children in care and how many children there are for each adult. Ask about training and education. Check how long the caregiver has been providing care. Find out if the child care facility is licensed and, if it is accredited, what standards it meets.

4. Evaluate your Options

Did the children look happy? Was the environment well cared for? Were the children supervised at all times? Were the children served nutritious meals? Were the children engaged in play with educational opportunities? Were the staff well-trained? Can you visit your children at any time?

5. Make a Choice

Think about what you saw at each visit, then make the best choice for your child and family. Does the caregiver like children? Is the setting appropriate for children? Is it safe?

6. Stay Informed

The work isn't over when you find good care for your child. You and your child's caregiver are partners now. Have regular meetings with your caregiver. Volunteer time when needed. Be there for your child's special events.

Things to Consider When Choosing Child Care!

You are the person who knows best what you and your child need in a child care setting. The following is a checklist from Child Care Aware that you can use as a guide to assist you in finding quality child care. You are the person who knows best what you and your child need in a child care setting.

The Caregivers/

Teachers:

- seem to really like children
- get down to the child's level to speak to the child
- greet the children when they arrive
- meet the children's needs, even when they are busy
- are involved in continuing education, including first aid/CPR and learning about the ways children grow and learn
- are ready to answer your questions about your child and the activities he/she is involved in

The Setting:

- is pleasant, bright, child-oriented, and safe
- is a space where children are encouraged to explore and create
- has areas for quiet and active play and resting for individuals and groups
- has both indoor and outdoor play spaces in all weather
- has a variety of safe equipment both indoors and outdoors, in a fenced and easily supervised space large enough for the numbers of children in care

Activities:

- are for all ages in care with enough toys, equipment, and materials for all. TV should play only a small part in the program
- have toys that are clean, safe, age appropriate and within reach of the children
- encourage children to do as much as they can for themselves
- infants are given space to crawl, walk, and play out of playpens, swings and seats



Other Things to Consider:

- Do you agree with the discipline practices? Do adults explain clearly to children what is expected in words they can understand?
- Do you hear sounds of happy children, actively engaged in fun activities? Are children comforted when they need it?
- Are drop-in visits from parents supported?
- Is the program licensed? If not, why not?

Assistance with the Cost of Care

If you need help paying for child care, the Department of Human Services has programs that help low income families pay child care bills:

The Employment-Related Day Care program (ERDC) is for working families who earn below a certain income level and need child care in order to work.

The **JOBS Child Care** program is for parents who are on the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families program (TANF) and need child care to participate in JOBS.

If you are eligible for ERDC or JOBS child care and your provider is a friend or relative, they can earn a higher rate by taking certain trainings. This rate is called the **Enhanced Rate** and it is 7% higher than the standard rate.

For information about ERDC and JOBS, call your local DHS office or Child Care Resource and Referral program.

Other Assistance

Child Dependent Care Tax Credits – you may be able to deduct part of your child care expenses from federal and state taxes. You must file federal and/or state tax returns to receive these benefits. For more information contact the IRS at www.irs.gov or contact the Oregon Department of Revenue at www.dor.state.or.us.

Earned Income Tax Credits - low income working families may be eligible for these benefits, even if taxes are not owed. File federal and state income tax returns to apply. For more information, contact the IRS at www.irs.gov or contact the Oregon Department of Revenue at www.dor.state.or.us.

Employer-Supported Benefits – federal and state tax incentives exist for employers who help employees pay for their child care. Talk with your employer about these benefits.

Co-operative Preschools – some preschools offer lower cost to parents who participate in program activities.

Sliding Fee Schedules/Scholarships – depending on income, providers may offer a sliding fee scale or a discount for multiple children. Families may also be eligible to apply for scholarships.

Head Start and other Government-funded programs – families may be eligible for free or reduced cost programs that receive federal or state funds. Talk with your local CCR&R program for more information.

State Resources

- **Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)** programs statewide serve 36 counties, offering personalized assistance on choosing quality child care, making referrals to local child care facilities,

Local CCR&R Programs

Local Child Care Resource and Referral programs (CCR&R) assist parents when looking for child care by helping them **connect**, **educate** and **navigate** the child care system. **We are Oregon's Child Care Search Engine!**

- Offering personalized assistance on choosing quality child care
- Making referrals to local child care facilities
- Connecting families with resources to help with the cost of care
- Finding care options to help with non-traditional work schedules and children with special needs

Baker, Grant, Harney, Malheur, Union and Wallowa, *Child Care Resource and Referral* 541.963.7942 or 800.956.0324

Clackamas, *Child Care Resource and Referral of Clackamas County*, 503.675.4100 or 866.371.4373

Coos and Curry, *CARE Connections*, 541.888.7957 or 800.611.7555

Clatsop, Lincoln and Tillamook, *Family Care Connection for Clatsop, Lincoln & Tillamook*, 541.265.2558 or 800.603.2728

Deschutes, Crook and Jefferson, *NeighborImpact Child Care Resources*, 541.548.2380 or 888.298.2672

Gilliam, Hood River, Sherman, Wasco and Wheeler, *Child Care Partners*, 541.506.6131 or 800.755.1143

Jackson, Josephine, Klamath and Lake, *Child Care Resource Network of Southern Oregon*, 541.776.1234 or 800.866.9034

Lane and Douglas, *Family Connections of Lane and Douglas Counties*, 541.463.3954 or 800.222.3290

Linn and Benton, *Family Connections*, 541.917.4899 or 800.845.1363

Marion, Polk and Yamhill, *Child Care Information Service*, 503.585.2491 or 800.289.5533

Multnomah, *Child Care Resource & Referral of Multnomah County*, 503.548.4400 or 866.227.5529

Umatilla and Morrow, *Child Care Resource and Referral*, 541.564.6878 or 800.559.5878

Washington and Columbia, *Child Care Resource & Referral in Washington and Columbia Counties*, 971.223.6100 or 800.624.9516



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