

C hildcare Options

Child Care Centers provide care for children in their own buildings, community centers, places of worship or other facilities. Centers may provide care for infants through school-age children – usually separated into same or similar-age groups. In Alabama, legally operating child care centers can be licensed or exempt from licensure. The licensing authority is the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR). The health department, the fire department and the Department of Human Resources inspect child care centers before awarding licenses. Licenses are valid for two years and should be on display in the center. Licensing is intended to set standards for operating a child care program. It is not a guarantee of high quality care. Parents have the right to visit the center at any time during operating hours. Providers exempt from licensure include centers operated by the following: religious or faith-based organizations, state agencies, local governments, military facilities and programs that operate less than 4 hours a day. .

Family Day Care Homes and Family Day Care Group Homes

Family Day Care Homes provide care for no more than 6 unrelated children. Group Homes provide care for no more than 12 unrelated children with two or more caregivers present. Family Day Care Homes provide care for infants through school-age children in a multi-age group setting.

In Alabama, legally operating Family Day/Nighttime Care Homes and Group Day/Nighttime Homes must have a license if they are providing care for one or more unrelated children, with or without compensation, away from the child's home, for more than four hours in a 24-hour period. The licensing authority is the local county Department of Human Resources (DHR). The health department, the fire department and DHR inspect family day care providers before awarding a license. Licenses are valid for two years and should be on display in the homes. Licensing is intended to set standards for operating a child care facility. It is not a guarantee of high quality care. Parents have the right to visit the program anytime during operating hours.

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Preschool Programs (Mother's Day Out) can be located in their own buildings, community centers or places of worship. Preschool Programs usually operate three to four hours a day, a few days a week for children ranging in age from infants through four-year olds.

School-Age Child Care generally takes place in child care centers, schools, community centers, YMCA/YWCA's or in conjunction with civic park and recreation programs. Care is typically available before and after school, on school holidays and during the summer. School-age child care programs offer care for children in kindergarten through usually thirteen years of age.

Relative Child Care arrangements occur when a family relative – grandparent, aunt, uncle or an adult sibling cares for a related child typically in a residential setting.

In-Home Child Care is when parents hire an individual nanny to come into their home to care for their children. As a nanny's employer, parents may be responsible for withholding and remitting payroll taxes, contributing to Social Security, and paying for worker's compensation, insurance and vacation time.

Head Start and Early Head Start are federal programs that promote the growth and development of children from low-income families. Parent involvement, health screenings and family support are included in the programs. Children ages 3 to 5 attend Head Start. Early Head Start serves families with children pre-birth to 3 years of age. Head Start and Early Head Start may be provided in centers or a home-based settings. Parents must meet eligibility requirements to enroll. For more information on Head Start and Early Head Start please call Childcare Resources.

First Class, Alabama's Voluntary State Pre-K program is managed by the Alabama Office of School Readiness (OSR), a division of the Alabama Department of Children's Affairs. OSR funds programs that provide quality preschool experiences to 4-year old children to prepare them for school. Pre-K sites are located throughout the state. For a complete listing of programs visit www.children.alabama.gov.