



Choose the best childcare for your family!

**Your step-by-step guide
to giving your child the
best start in life through
*Quality Child Care***



Community & Family Services

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One of the most important decisions parents make is choosing a child care program. Enrolling your child in a quality program means your child is receiving care from a caring, trained child care provider in a safe, healthy, nurturing and stimulating learning environment. Your child's experience in child care will begin your child's foundation of learning that will last a lifetime!

This brochure will help you:

- select the best quality program for your child
- understand your child care options
- access financial assistance available to help pay for child care

Selecting Quality Programs

Childcare Resources promotes *quality* care and education of children by providing information, education and assistance to families, providers of child care and the community. *Childcare Resources does not license, endorse or recommend any provider. Only you can determine whether the quality of care is appropriate for your child.* When beginning your child care search:

- Call, go on-line or visit Childcare Resources for a customized listing of child care options.
- Start the process early as some maintain waiting lists.
- Make an appointment and visit several programs.
- Tour the entire center, including the outdoor play area.
- Use the Six Quality Indicators to compare programs
- After the initial visit, make an unannounced drop-by visit before making a final decision.

6 Quality Indicators

Teacher to child ratio

How many caregivers are there for a specified number of children? The fewer the number of children per caregiver the better attention your child will receive.

Group size

How many children will be in your child's group? The teacher to child ratio can be 1-10 for a class of three year olds, but there is a difference between a group size of 20 children versus a group size of 30 children.

Caregiver education and turnover

Ask about the caregivers' training and education. Do teachers attend classes and workshops? How long has the teacher been teaching in the program? Young children do better when they have a consistent caregiver for a least a year.

Health and Safety

Is the program licensed or exempt from licensure? Why or why not? What is the discipline policy? Is the environment clean and organized?

Family Involvement

Are parents welcome to participate and share ideas with the program? How will the teacher share information with you about your child's day?

Accreditation

Nationally accredited programs are measured by standards of quality that have been established by national child care organizations.

For more information about national accreditation visit:

National Association for the Education of Young Children www.naeyc.org

National Association of Child Care Professionals www.naccp.org

National Association for Family Child Care www.nafcc.org

National After School Association www.naaweb.org


National Early Childhood Program Accreditation www.necpa.org

Childcare Options

Child Care Centers provide care for children in their own building, 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 a license. 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 licensing include centers operated by the following: a religious or faith-based organization; State Agency; local government or military facilities, or programs that operate less than 4 hours a day.

Family Day Care Homes and Family Day Care Group Homes

A Family Day Care Home provides care for no more than 6 unrelated children. A Group Home provides care for no more than 12 unrelated children with two or more caregivers present. Family Day Care Providers 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 child(ren); 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 home. 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.



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 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 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, you may be responsible for contributing to Social Security, taxes, worker's compensation costs, 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, a health program and family support are included in the program. Children ages 3 to 5 year olds attend Head Start. Early Head Start serves families with children pre-birth to 3 years old. Head Start and Early Head Start may be provided in a center or a home-based setting. For more information on Head Start/Early Head Start please call Childcare Resources.

First Class, Alabama's Voluntary State Pre-K program is overseen 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.

Financial Assistance

Child Care Subsidy

The Office of Child Care Subsidy, a division of the Alabama Department of Human Resources (DHR) administers the subsidized child care program funded through the Child Care and Development Fund. The program provides Alabama's low income families with equal access to child care as they participate in work, educational or training activities. For information and an application visit www.dhr.state.al.us.

Subsidized Child Care Program – Childcare Resources

Childcare Resources administers a financial aid program for families living in Blount, Jefferson, Shelby and Walker counties. Families must meet eligibility requirements:

- Live in Blount, Jefferson, Shelby or Walker Counties
- Parent (spouse) is working at least 35 hours a week
- Not be receiving assistance through the DHR
- Applying for a child up to 5 years of age
- Qualify according to the Annual Income Eligibility Scale

For more information and an application visit www.ccr-bhm.org or call 205-252-1991 ext. 307.

Military Child Care Assistance

The National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) through a partnership with the Department of Defense, offers military families child care assistance. The program allows active duty and/or deployed service members child care fees if they are unable to access child care on a military base. The program pays a portion of the family's child care fees directly to the child care provider. For eligibility information call Child Care Aware at 1-800-424-2246 or visit www.NACCRRA.com.



Tax Credits

Child and Dependent Care Credit is available to people who, in order to work or to look for work, must pay for child care for dependents under the age of 13. The credit is also available for payments made to care for a spouse or a dependent of any age that is physically or mentally incapable of self-care. The credit is a percentage, based on your adjusted gross income, of the amount of work-related child and dependent care expenses you paid to a care provider.

Earned Income Tax Credit is a refundable federal income tax credit for working individuals and families who earn low incomes. To qualify, taxpayers must meet certain requirements and file a tax return, even if they did not earn enough money to be obligated to file a tax return.

Child Tax Credit may help to reduce the federal income tax owed by up to \$1,000 for each qualifying child under the age of 17. A qualifying child is someone who is claimed as your dependent; was under the age of 17 at the end of the year; is your son, daughter, adopted child, grandchild, stepchild or eligible foster child, your sibling, stepsibling or their descendant and is a U.S. citizen or resident alien. The credit is limited if your modified adjusted gross income is above a certain amount. The amount at which the phase-out begins depends of your filing status.

For more information on these and other tax credits visit www.irs.gov.

Free Tax Preparation Service is available through the United Way of Central Alabama Call 1-866-869-4921 for more information.

Pre-tax Accounts for child and dependent care may be available through your employer. This option requires you to estimate your annual expenses (up to \$5,000 a year) and draw those funds throughout the year from an account that has been set up using pre-tax dollars from your payroll deductions. Ask you employer if this is available where you work.

Standards for Child Care Centers and Nighttime Centers

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Child Care Teacher/Worker Qualifications

Child care workers/teachers who have primary responsibility for the care of a group of children shall be at least 19 years of age and shall have a high school diploma or general education diploma (G.E.D.). Within 30 days after employment, child care teachers shall have at least 12 clock hours of training in child care and development through participation in workshops, meetings, videotapes, or one-to-one consultation, unless written documentation of prior equivalent training is on file. Training in child care shall include at least 1 hour in each of these areas:

(1) child development; (2) health, safety and universal precautions; (3) quality child care and licensing; (4) the child care professional and the family; (5) language development; (6) positive discipline and guidance.

Aides/assistant teachers who assist with groups of children shall be at least 16 years of age and shall have at least an 8th grade education; work under the direct supervision of a person qualified as a child care worker/teacher and shall not be counted in the required staff-child ratio.

Health and Safety

Each child 2 months to lawful school age must have an Alabama Certificate of Immunization or a medical/religious exemption on file in the child care center. No child who appears ill may be admitted to the child care center. The center director must report suspected illness, injury or exposure to contagious disease to the parent/guardian. No medicine may be given to a child without a written and signed authorization from the parent/guardian. All medicine must be in the original container and in locked storage. In accordance with the American Academy of Pediatrics, all infants under 12 months should be placed on their back to sleep, unless the infant has a note from a physician specifying otherwise. There must be a clearly posted list of emergency numbers and plans for care of children in emergency situations. At least one staff member with a current CPR/First Aid Certification must be in the center during operating hours. The center and grounds must be maintained in a clean and safe condition. All administrators, board members, teachers, assistants, substitutes, support staff and volunteers must complete a criminal background check.

Care of Children

The parent/guardian must sign each child in upon arrival and out upon departure every day. The parent/guardian must provide written authorization before the center may release the child to anyone else. Children must be supervised at all times. Feeding and napping schedule of infants shall be planned with the parent/guardian. Breakfast or a morning snack, a mid-day meal and one afternoon snack must be provided each day. Menu should be posted. Children should spend time outdoors each day when weather permits.

There should be a posted schedule and a variety of age appropriate indoor and outdoor activities for preschool and school-age children. A variety of age appropriate toys, games and play equipment should be available to the children. Corporal/physical punishment, verbal abuse and physical restraint are prohibited.

Alabama Licensing Regulations for Child Care Centers

Staff to Child Ratio

Required Staff to Child Ratios in Child Care Centers (maintained at all times)

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 0 up to 18 months | 1 teacher to 5 children |
| 18 months up to 2 1/2 years | 1 teacher to 7 children |
| 24 months up to 36 months | 1 teacher to 8 children |
| 2 1/2 years up to 4 years | 1 teacher to 11 children |
| 4 years up to school age* | 1 teacher to 18 children |
| School age* up to 8 years | 1 teacher to 21 children |
| 8 years and older | 1 teacher to 22 children |

*The term "school age" in this context refers to children of lawful school age who are enrolled in public or private school.

Required Staff to Child Ratios during Napping/Resting

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 0 up to 12 months | 1 teacher to 5 children |
| 18 months up to 2 1/2 years | 1 teacher to 14 children |
| 2 1/2 years and older | 1 teacher to 36 children |

At least one person who meets child care worker qualifications shall be present in each room where children are napping/resting. Staff shall be able to see all the children in the room.

Centers operating Nighttime Care

Required staff to child ratios and groupings for day care centers shall be maintained while children are awake. Children shall be supervised at all times.

Staff to Child Ratio for Sleeping Children in Nighttime Child Care

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 0 up to 18 months | 1 teacher to 5 children |
| 18 months up to 2 1/2 years | 1 teacher to 14 children |
| 2 1/2 years up to 4 years | 1 teacher to 18 children |
| 4 years and older | 1 teacher to 25 children |

At least one person shall be present in each room of sleeping children. Staff shall be able to see children at all times.

At least one person who is at least 19 years of age, who meets child care worker qualifications and has current Infant-Child CPR, shall be present at the center. All staff on duty shall be awake and alert to the needs of the children. There shall be at least two staff persons age 19 or older available in the center building or on the premises whenever children are present. Nighttime schedule shall be posted. Outdoor time shall be available to children during daylight hours. Any child who goes directly to school from the center shall be served breakfast unless breakfast is eaten at school. An evening meal shall be served to children. If a child is bathed, clean water, individual bar of soap, towel and washcloth shall be provided for each child. Each child should be bathed separately and be supervised while bathing.

Documents you should have

Most recent license, Public notice form. Most recent licensing inspection report. Most recent deficiency corrective or adverse action report. Most recent fire inspection report. Most recent Health Department report from Health Department. Menu for meals and snacks. Emergency names and addresses. Emergency procedure.

Questions you should ask

Are you licensed or certified? How many children are in the center? How long has the teacher been employed? What training requirements do you have? How will you help me understand the center? How will you let me know if there is a problem? How do you handle emergencies? May I drop in and visit? What happens when a child is sick? What safety precautions do you have for the bus or van? What fees do you charge?

Child Abuse and Neglect

Alabama law is clear that you are someone who can report child abuse or neglect. You are a teacher, nurse, child care worker, neighbor, friend, or family member. You report to those who are trained to report. To report

Blount County
Jefferson County
Shelby County
Walker County

Requirements for Child Care Centers and Nighttime Centers

| | |
|--|--|
| Required at all times) | Documents you should see posted in the center |
| | Most recent license, permit or approval from DHR. |
| | Public notice form. |
| | Most recent licensing evaluation form. |
| | Most recent deficiency report, if applicable. |
| | Corrective or adverse action notices, if applicable. |
| | Most recent fire inspection report. |
| | Most recent Health Department inspection report and food permit or written permission from Health Department to cater food. |
| Required for children of all ages who are | Menu for meals and snacks. |
| | Emergency names and telephone numbers for fire department, law enforcement, medical assistance, poison control center and substitute help. |
| Required during | Emergency procedures. |

Questions you should ask when visiting a Child Care Center

| | |
|---|---|
| Required for children present in each of the children in the | Are you licensed or exempt from licensure? |
| | How many children will be in my child's group? |
| | How long has the teacher who will take care of my child worked at the center? |
| | What training requirements do you have for your teachers? |
| | How will you help my child adjust to your center? |
| Required for children age 3 and older maintained while | How will you let me know about my child's day? |
| | How do you handle medical, fire and weather emergencies? |
| | May I drop in and visit at any time? |
| Required for Child Care | What happens when my child's teacher is sick or on vacations? |
| | What safety precautions do you take when children go on field trips or are transported by bus or van? |
| | What fees do you charge and when are they due? |

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

| | |
|---|---|
| Required for all staff shall be able to | Alabama law is clear on reporting abuse and neglect of children under the age of 18. If you are someone who comes in regular contact with children- physician, teacher, social worker, nurse, child care worker – you should be aware of your legal obligation to report such incidents of suspected or obvious child abuse or neglect. If you are a concerned citizen, neighbor, friend or family member who is aware of such incidents, you should make a report to those who can take action. All Childcare Resources employees are mandated reporters. To report suspected child abuse and neglect please call: |
| Required for all staff on duty at least two staff per center whenever children are available to children in the center shall be able to be served to eat and washcloth shall be supervised | |
| | Blount County 205-274-5200 |
| | Jefferson County 205-918-5100 |
| | Shelby County 205-669-3000 |
| | Walker County 205-387-5400 |

Requirements for Family Day Care and Group Day Care Homes

Family Day Care Homes, Group Day Care Homes, and Group Child Care Homes are providing care away from the home. The licensing authority in The Health Department is issuing a license. The licensing is intended to ensure high quality care during hours.

There have been substantiated concerns in which the

205-945-3700
205-387-5400

For Family Day Care Homes, please visit

Diploma or G.E.D., training in child care of the following

quality child care program development;

related to child care

100-hour diploma or training in child care during clock hours annually

There shall be at least 8 hours of First Aid training.

Indicate of child care center. No child

who appears ill may be admitted to the day care home. The family day care operator must report suspected illness, injury or exposure to contagious disease to the parent/guardian. No medicine may be given to a child without a written and signed authorization from the parent/guardian. All medicine must be in the original container and maintained in a locked storage. In accordance with the American Academy of Pediatrics, all infants under 12 months should be placed on their back to sleep, unless the infant has a note from a physician specifying otherwise. There must be a clearly posted list of emergency numbers and plans for care of children in emergency situations. The family day care operator, assistant and substitute must have a current CPR/First Aid Certification. The home and grounds must be maintained in a clean and safe condition. The outdoor play area must be enclosed by a fence or a wall. The licensee, assistants, substitute and all adult members of the household must complete a criminal background check.

Care of Children

Family day care home may care for no more than 6 unrelated children. A group day care home may care for 7 to 12 unrelated children. Whenever 7 or more children are present, at least 2 adult caregivers shall be present. If a substitute is used, either the licensee or the assistant caregiver shall be present supervising the children. The parent/guardian must sign each child in upon arrival and out upon departure every day. The parent/guardian must provide written authorization before the licensee may release the child to anyone else. Children must be supervised at all times. Feeding of infants shall be planned with the parent/guardian. Breakfast or a morning snack, a mid-day meal and one afternoon snack must be provided each day. Children should spend time outdoors each day when weather permits. A variety of age appropriate toys, games and play equipment should be available to the children. No child shall sleep or nap on the floor, upper bunk bed or water bed. Corporal/physical punishment, verbal abuse and physical restraint are prohibited.

Nighttime Care

A Family Day Care or Group Day Care Home providing care 7:00 p.m. or later is considered to offer nighttime care and shall have a Nighttime license. An evening meal shall be served to a child who is continuing in attendance from the day time program. If a child is bathed, clean water, individual bar of soap, towel and washcloth shall be provided for each child. Each child should be bathed separately and be supervised while bathing. A child under 18 months of age who receives his regular nighttime sleep at the Nighttime Home shall sleep alone in a crib. Each child 18 months or older shall sleep in a bed. In accordance with the American Academy of Pediatrics, all infants under 12 months should be placed on their back to sleep, unless the infant has a note from a physician specifying otherwise. Breakfast shall be served to each child who goes directly to school, unless breakfast is provided by the school or parent.

Questions you should ask when visiting a Family Day Care Provider

How long have you been operating a Family/Group Child Care Home?

How many children do you have enrolled?

What training have you taken this year?

Family Day Care and Group Day Care Homes *(continued)*

Questions you should ask when visiting a Family Day Care Provider

How long have you been operating a Family/Group Child Care Home?

How many children do you have enrolled?

What training have you taken this year?

How will you help my child adjust to your home?

What activities will you plan for my child?

How will you let me know about my child's day?

How do you handle behavior problems?

How do you handle medical, fire and weather emergencies?

May I drop in and visit anytime?

What happens when you are sick or on vacation?

What safety precautions do you take when children go on field trips or are transported by car or van?

What fees do you charge and when are they due?

Child Care Concerns and Complaints

If you need to report a licensing concern or want to know if a Child Care Center or Family Day Care Home you are considering has had a substantiated complaint, please contact DHR.

For information on child care centers, call the Child Care Services Division at 334-242-1425 or 1-866-528-1694.

For information on family day care providers, call the local county DHR office in which the home is located:

Blount County 205-274-5200

Jefferson County 205-945-3700

Shelby County 205-669-3007

Walker County 205-387-5400

For questions about licensing standards call DHR or to review the complete DHR Minimum Standards manuals visit www.dhr.state.al.us.

Quality Indicators

Look, Listen, Count, Ask and Be Informed!

The following questions can be useful as you search for a quality child care provider for your child. Feel free to take notes and compare several programs before making a final decision.

Teacher to child ratio and group size

What is the teacher to child ratio for your child's age group?

What is the teacher to child ratio when children are napping?

If children are transported what is the teacher to child ratio on the bus or van?

Caregiver qualifications

Are the caregivers trained and have experience in child development?

Is the caregiver certified in CPR and First Aid?

How long has the caregiver been teaching in the program?

Does the caregiver welcome children of all abilities and backgrounds?

Does the caregiver seem to really enjoy children?

Are children greeted when they arrive?

Is the caregiver someone your child will enjoy?

Does the caregiver talk with and listen to the children and treat them with patience?

Health and Safety

Are there plenty of age appropriate, safe and clean books, toys and materials?

Are children involved in a variety of activities with a balance of quiet and busy time?

Is the outside play area fenced and does it have safe equipment?

Can you visit your child at the program at any time, unannounced?

What is the discipline policy and do you agree with the discipline rules?

Is the environment clean and orderly?

Are emergency plans and numbers clearly posted?

Is the program licensed or exempt from licensure?

Are children closely supervised at all times?

Family Involvement

Are parents encouraged to share ideas and get involved in the program?

How will you be informed about your child's day?

Are parent-teacher meetings held during the year?

Is the classroom schedule posted?

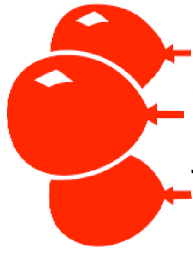
Is there a newsletter to inform you of upcoming events?

Licensing & Accreditation

Is the program licensed or exempt from licensure? Why or why not?

Is the program nationally accredited? Why or why not?

Is the license or accreditation credential posted?



We make quality child care happen.

childcare resources

Community & Family Services

1904 First Avenue North
Birmingham, AL 35203
205 252-1991, ext ??
www.ccr-bhm.org

Your step-by-step guide
to giving your child the
best start in life through
Quality Child Care