

HOME-BASED CHILD CARE



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Introduction

Choosing good child care is an important decision. Safe and positive child care sets the stage for healthy growth and development. It takes time, patience and understanding of what to look for when selecting child care.

Learn about different child care options and visit them before making a decision. Call and make an appointment. Look around the child care setting carefully. Watch how the children and adults interact with one another. Ask questions. Listen. Talk to parents who use the provider.

Once you have selected a child care setting and your child is in care, keep asking questions. Always check to make sure the program still meets the needs of your family. It's a lot of work, but your child is worth it.

Selecting child care is an important step in the life of your child. You know the needs of your child and family. This important decision will make a big difference in your child's development, health and happiness.

Think About Child Care Resources of Rockland, Inc.

We all have a responsibility to teach our children, whether we are parents, employers or child care and education professionals. Child Care Resources of Rockland, Inc. offers a wide range of services addressing the unique needs and concerns of each group, while remaining focused on what is best for the children of Rockland County.

Parents Receive:

- Assistance in locating before and after-school care, emergency back-up, mildly ill child care services, vacation and holiday care.
- Information to help parents determine the type of program that best serves the needs of both child and family. Options include child care centers, family child care programs, nursery schools, Head Start and Universal PreKindergarten.
- Help in accessing services for children with special needs, including integrated care arrangements, child care subsidies and support services.
- Comprehensive support that empowers parents to make informed choices for their children.
- Stable supply of child care providers through ongoing recruitment and training of providers.

Six Tips When Looking for Child Care

1. Visit the child care program while it is open and children are there.
2. Take the time to talk to the provider and ask questions. Look around the program to see how things are handled.
3. Make sure the child care program:
 - Has enough providers for the number of children. Check New York State regulations for child/provider ratios.
 - ✓ How many children are in your care?
 - ✓ What age groups do you serve?
 - Takes steps to prevent accidents and has a plan to handle fire or medical emergencies.
 - Knows how to help children stay healthy and feeds infants on their own schedule.
 - ✓ Do you provide meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks?)
 - Plans a balance of indoor and outdoor time that is active and quiet.
4. A good relationship between the children and provider is important. The provider should:
 - Enjoy talking to and playing with the children.
 - Have experience, education and/or training in caring for children.
 - ✓ What training have you (and other staff/substitutes) had?
 - ✓ May I see a copy of your license or other certification?
5. Consider the cost, location and hours the child care program is open.
6. Ask other parents:
 - ✓ Was the provider reliable on a daily basis?
 - ✓ How did the provider discipline your child?
 - ✓ Did your child enjoy the child care experience?
 - ✓ How did the provider respond to you as a parent?
 - ✓ Was the provider respectful of your values and culture?
 - ✓ Would you recommend the provider without reservation?
 - ✓ If your child is no longer with the provider, why did you leave?

Think About the Type of Child Care

Licensed or registered child care settings must meet specific health, safety and program requirements. Some providers may not be required to meet state regulations to legally provide child care. These options should meet your own standards for the health, safety and development of your child.

Regulated Child Care Situations for All Ages

- Child Care Center** - A child care center refers to child care in a non-residential setting. Most centers offer a full day program and are open year round. Some centers will accept children on a part-time basis, and others will not. Some centers provide care to children of all ages, including school age children, before and after school and when school is not in session. Other centers provide care to one age group, such as preschoolers or infants. There are centers that are small, enrolling perhaps only 15 children and others that are larger, enrolling more than 100 children. A child care center must be licensed by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (NYSOCFS). The center must meet specific requirements for facility, health, safety, staffing and educational programs.
- Family Child Care Program** - A family child care program takes place in the provider's home for all or part of the day. One provider cares for a small group of children, usually of mixed ages. A family child care program may care for children ages 6 weeks through 12 years of age. In New York State a family child care program must meet minimum requirements of NYSOCFS if they care for more than 2 children for more than 3 hours a day. A family child care provider may care for up to 8 children as long as 2 are school age and no more than 2 are under the age of two. Always check the NYS Registration Certificate for the actual capacity.
- Group Family Child Care Program** - A group family child care program takes place in the provider's home for all or part of the day. A group family child care provider may care for children ages 6 weeks through 12 years of age. One provider and at least one assistant care for a group of children, usually of mixed ages, and may care for up to 16 children as long as 4 are school age and there is one provider per 2 children under the age of two; not to exceed 12. Always check the NYS License for the actual capacity.

Think About the Type of Child Care

Regulated Child Care Situations for All Ages

Head Start - Head Start can be licensed as a child care center and provides additional services to children and families. It is a federally funded early childhood program for low income families with 3-4 year old children delivered at early childhood centers. It is free to families that qualify and provides health and education services to all children, including children who have special needs. The program offers many services for their families as well. All Head Start centers in Rockland County are licensed by NYSOCFS. There is also an Early Head Start component for pregnant women and children birth to three years. Early Head Start is delivered as a home visiting program and at centers.

School Age Child Care - This refers to care for school age children in the hours before and after school and at times when school is not in session. Child care centers, family child care and group family child care programs may offer school age child care. Public schools, youth recreation groups, religious organizations and other community groups often sponsor school age care programs. These programs are required to be registered by NYSOCFS. Always check the NYS Registration Certificate for actual capacity.

New York State Universal Prekindergarten - This is a state funded public school prekindergarten program for children who turn 4 by December 1st of the school year. In Rockland County, this free program is offered in all 8 school districts, in a variety of different child care settings, is 2½ hours a day, 5 days a week for 180 days. Slots are limited.

Legally Exempt Care - This program enrolls providers in order for them to be able to receive child care subsidy funds. Care is usually provided by a child's relative, friend or neighbor who cares for one or two children not related to the provider. Additional related children may be in care.

Legal but Not Regulated Child Care Situations

Nursery Schools - These are social and educational programs for children ages 3 to 5 years of age. They operate for less than 3 hours per session, 2 to 5 times a week and often follow a school year calendar. They are not required to be licensed and may need approval of the local health department. They can voluntarily register with the New York State Department of Education, which sets guidelines for facility, staff and program.

Think About the Type of Child Care

- Informal Care** - This is care that is provided by a child's relative, friend or neighbor who cares for one or two children not related to the provider. Additional related children may be in care.
- In-Home Care** - This means care in the child's home by someone that the parent has employed. There are trained in-home providers, usually called nannies, as well as in-home providers that have no training. There are live-in or live-out in-home providers. This type of provider is not required to be licensed in New York State.
- Summer Day Camps** - These offer full or part day summer activities, frequently outdoors. Religious organizations, community centers or private groups may operate summer camps. In New York State, summer camps must have a state, city or county Health Department Permit to operate legally.
- Playgroups** - This refers to loosely structured social programs for toddlers or preschoolers. Playgroups operate for short periods of time several times a week.

Completing the Checklist

Finding the best possible child care situation is essential if your child is to thrive while you are away from her. But how can you tell if a center or a child care home will provide what's necessary for your child's well being and healthy development?

There are national accreditation systems that a child care program can apply for. Ask if the program is accredited. If so, it signifies a high level of quality.

Visit each program. Ask the provider questions and look around to see how things are handled. Ask about the things that are important to you and not on the checklist. Based on what you find, write Y/yes or N/no in the space provided. Once you've completed your visits, compare the different programs. Talk to other parents who use the provider. Then decide on the best program for your child and family.

In addition to asking questions, be sure to provide all of the details about your child's needs, with examples of what he does and doesn't enjoy, his preferred methods of communicating, and his specific interests and abilities. Encourage open communication and ask if the child care provider has any questions or concerns to share.

Think About Family Needs

The cost of care, program hours and transportation are important things to consider when selecting child care. Make sure the policies and rules of the child care program are available in writing.

Family Needs	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
You can get to the child care setting from home and from work.			
For school age child care, parents must also consider transportation to and from the provider and school and whether the care is available during school holidays and snow days.			
The program is open the hours your child needs care.			
Ask the provider about payment policies including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child care subsidy payments. • Payment options. • Due dates and late fees. • Vacation and holiday payment. • Scholarships. • Bartering. 			
Parents may visit the child care program any time it is open.			
Parents get a copy of the policies and rules for the child care program.			
Parents are told about the activities for children at least once a week.			

Think About the Provider

A good relationship between the child, family and provider is important to everyone. The provider should have experience, education and/or training in child care. The provider should enjoy talking to and playing with children and communicate well with parents.

Think About the Provider	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
The provider has experience caring for children and really enjoys working with them.			
The provider takes training and/or education courses to learn about the health, safety and development of children.			
The provider greets each child and parent when coming to and leaving the program.			
Disabilities: Are staff trained to respond to a child's disability or special need? If not, are they willing to obtain the training? Is the facility accessible? Will staff make program accommodations? How are other children taught about disabilities? How will the program respond to classmates' parents who have questions about a child's disability?			
Providers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appear energetic and in good physical health, able to keep up with the children. • Are warm, affectionate and seem to enjoy being with the children. • Use a pleasant tone of voice and talk a lot to the children including infants and toddlers, if they are in the group. • Seem to be easy for you to talk to and work with. 			
When a child is upset, the provider meets the child's needs quickly even when the program is busy.			
The provider respects and asks questions to better understand the values and culture of the child's family.			
The provider has pets (i.e. dog, cat, etc.). Are pets healthy and safe around children? Do they have required veterinarian care, such as a yearly rabies shot? Are they and their cages clean?			

Think About Safety

It is important to know what steps the provider takes to prevent accidents and what plans are in place in case of emergencies.

Preventing Accidents	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
Children are supervised by the provider and can be seen and heard at all times, even at naptime.			
<p>The child care program is childproofed to prevent accidents. Protections include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Poisonous and dangerous materials like medicines, cleaning solutions, pesticides, detergents, poisonous plants and household chemicals are stored out of the reach of children. ● Electrical sockets are covered. ● There are child proof locks on cabinets. ● Hanging cords from blinds are secured. ● Small household objects that may be a choking hazard are out of reach. ● There are safety gates on stairs. ● Tools are kept out of children's reach. ● Windows are secured with window locks. ● Plastic bags are kept out of children's reach. ● Radiators are covered. ● Sharp edges of furniture are cushioned with corner guards or other material. ● Thermostat on water heater is set at 120°F. ● If there are firearms in the home, they are locked up where the children cannot get them. 			

Think About Safety

Preventing Accidents	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
The child care program has been checked for lead, radon and asbestos.			
There is fencing or another sturdy barrier to keep children away from pools, ponds and other bodies of water.			
The provider regularly checks the outdoor and indoor equipment for wear and tear.			
Handling Emergencies			
The provider has a plan to handle fire and medical emergencies.			
The provider has a stocked first-aid kit.			
At least one staff person on-site is certified in First Aid and CPR.			
The provider knows how to handle minor injuries and what to do when an injury requires a trip to the doctor or emergency room.			
There is a working phone. Fire, Police, ambulance and poison control telephone numbers are posted.			

Notes

Think About Keeping Children Healthy

To keep children healthy, the provider should encourage good health habits and take steps to prevent the spread of germs. Make sure you know the program has an approved health care plan and ask to see a copy. Child care programs must also follow specific rules to give over-the-counter and prescription medicine to children.

Keeping Children Healthy	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
All children must have up-to-date immunizations.			
The provider prevents the spread of germs by washing hands many times during the day. Children also wash their hands often during the day.			
The child care setting is clean. Toys, furniture and floors are washed frequently with a bleach solution to prevent the spread of germs.			
Diapers are changed when dirty and the changing area is cleaned with a bleach solution after each use.			

Notes

Think About Keeping Children Healthy

When Children Are Sick or Injured	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
The provider's health care plan meets the health care needs of my child.			
The provider has a plan to handle medical emergencies.			
The health care plan includes whether the provider will give medicine to the children.			
<p>The provider has the skills and training to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give over-the-counter or prescription medicine. • Know a minor injury from one that needs medical attention. • Give first aid and CPR. 			

Eating Healthy	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
Menus for meals and snacks include a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, bread and milk products.			
Feeding infants is planned with parents. Infants are held when fed a bottle and start eating solid foods slowly and carefully.			
The provider accommodates special needs diets.			

Think About Keeping Children Healthy

Eating Healthy	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
Toddlers are fed smaller portions. Foods that may cause choking like popcorn, carrots, peanuts or raisins are not served.			
Mealtime is for learning skills like self-feeding finger foods, using a spoon or fork, or setting the table.			
The provider is available for children needing assistance. Accidents are handled accordingly.			
Snack time is flexible and long enough that school aged children do not need to rush.			
Snack or meal time is a time for children to talk about their day with friends and the provider.			

Notes

Think About Their Day

A child care setting that offers a variety of activities and experiences will help children develop skills for future readiness. Look for a balance of active, quiet, indoor and outdoor play based on the abilities and interests of children.

Talking and Language	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
<p>To help children use words the provider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reads stories, sings songs and names objects with the children. • Talks to children even during times like changing diapers and feeding. • Offers books, games and other materials such as colorful cloth and cardboard boxes. • Encourages children to talk and ask questions. 			

After a full day of school, each child will have different needs. The provider should offer a variety of free choice activities for the children. There should be a balance of active, quiet, indoor and outdoor play.

Talking and Language	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
<p>Children are encouraged to read, write, talk and ask questions. There is a variety of books and magazines for all ages and reading levels.</p>			

Watching Television	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
<p>Watching television and videos is not recommended for infants and toddlers.</p>			
<p>For older children television and videos are only used for short periods of time and for educational purposes.</p>			
<p>There are other activities for children who do not want to watch television or videos.</p>			
<p>The use of hand-held electronic games is limited.</p>			

Think About Their Day

Learning, Thinking and Imagination	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
<p>There is a variety of, and enough materials and toys that are clean, safe and in good repair such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe toys for infants to see, hear, touch and put in their mouths. • Toys and materials like large cardboard blocks, water and sand and stacking toys for toddlers. • Music toys, or a radio/cd/tape player. • Before school, quiet activities are planned to help the children get ready for the school day. • Indoor and outdoor pretend play materials like dress-up clothes, pots and pans, toy tools, water and sand. • Paper, crayons, paint and clay. • Toys, puzzles and board games. • Activities are planned for children to work on together like planting a garden or making snacks. 			

Active and Quiet Time	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
The outdoor and indoor play spaces and equipment are clean, safe and free of sharp edges.			
The provider takes the children outdoors every day unless the weather is bad.			
There are safe, active ways for children to release energy and move muscles after being in school all day.			
Younger children do not compete with the older children for play space.			

Think About Their Day

Active and Quiet Time	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
Indoor space is large enough for infants and toddlers to crawl, and to use balls and push/ride toys.			
There are soft pieces of furniture and toys when children need quiet space and time.			
For outdoor water play the provider does not use wading and other pools where the water is regularly dumped for sanitary reasons.			

Toileting	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
The provider works with parents to help toddlers and children needing assistance with toilet use. Toileting accidents are handled calmly.			

During Naptime	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
Children are always seen and heard.			
Infants sleep when needed.			
The provider plans rest/naptime for the children each day.			
The space is clean, quiet and large enough for naptime.			
Quiet activities are planned for children who wake up early or do not nap.			
To prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, infants sleep on their backs. There are no stuffed toys or soft or loose bedding in cribs.			

Think About Positive Discipline

Providers need to set limits for children. Those limits depend on a child's age and abilities. Children should be reminded of the limits without hitting or scaring them, hurting their feelings or taking away something important like food or rest. Corporal punishment is never allowed.

Positive Discipline	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
The provider has a written discipline policy that is given to each parent.			
Parents and the provider talk about and agree on appropriate discipline.			
The provider understands babies are not disciplined, and are cared for with a comforting voice and gentle touch.			
The provider understands toddlers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are just beginning to talk and when upset may bite, hit, kick or have a tantrum instead of using words. • Do not know how to share toys. • Need lots of space and a variety of interesting things to play with. • May be frustrated with an activity and need help finding something else to do. 			

Emotional Development and Discipline	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
Reasonable discipline is maintained through careful supervision, clear limits and age appropriate explanations. No spanking or corporal punishment is ever used nor is harsh discipline such as shouting, shaming or withholding of food.			
Providers avoid conflicts between children by listening and watching carefully so they can step in early before things fall apart.			

Think About Positive Discipline

Emotional Development and Discipline	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
Providers use language wisely to encourage cooperation and helpfulness. They call attention to positive behaviors more often than “catching” them in negative behaviors.			
There is a pleasant, generally happy tone in the group much of the day. Providers show warmth and affection by smiling, talking to and hugging children. Infants and toddlers are held often.			
Providers are patient when annoying and unanticipated accidents occur such as spills at the table or accidents with toileting.			
Space is provided for children to play alone or in small groups, protected from the pressure and competition of the other children.			
Providers are able to discuss with parents the discipline methods used and are willing to find ways of solving a child’s problems.			

Notes

Before Making the Decision

Compare and consider the different providers you visited during your search. Ask other parents about the provider. Call the Spring Valley Regional Office (SVRO) of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (NYS OCFS) for licensing history (including regulatory violations) for any regulated program. To contact them, call (845) 708-2400 or visit their website at www.ocfs.state.ny.us. Then decide where you feel comfortable leaving your children and if it is the best fit for your family.

Before Making the Decision	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
The Spring Valley Regional Office of OCFS will let you know if the child care provider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is licensed or registered • Was licensed or registered in the past • Has registration/licensing or violation history 			
Talk to other families who use the provider.			

Notes

Before Making the Decision

Provider Information/Ratios

Use this section to write information about the programs visited. There should be enough providers for the number of children in a program. Child/provider ratios for regulated care are found in the state regulations. For care that is legal but not regulated, the guidelines are listed in this brochure.

Provider 1

Child Care Program _____

Child Care Address _____

Child Care
Phone Number _____

Email _____

Website _____

Type of Child Care _____

Number of Children/
Number of Providers _____

Before Making the Decision

Provider 2

Child Care Program _____

Child Care Address _____

Child Care
Phone Number _____

Email _____

Website _____

Type of Child Care _____

Number of Children/
Number of Providers _____

Provider 3

Child Care Program _____

Child Care Address _____

Child Care
Phone Number _____

Email _____

Website _____

Type of Child Care _____

Number of Children/
Number of Providers _____

Before Making the Decision

Paying for Child Care

You may be eligible for help to pay for child care. Contact the Rockland County Department of Social Services at (845) 574-4600 to get more information about child care subsidy assistance.

Child care, housing, food and taxes are the four major expenses of working parents. It is important that parents understand and expect that quality child care is expensive. Insuring the health, safety and happiness of your child while in child care is extremely important.

While all parents value the service provided, for many the cost of child care will be a serious concern. Be assured that there are some sources of financial assistance available for working parents. Another source of financial assistance for working parents are the federal and state tax credits and deductions. The federal and state governments give you credits on your personal income tax for child care. The Internal Revenue Service and New York State can provide you with instructions on how to claim this credit.

Talk with our Family Connections Specialists for further information concerning these.

Below is some general information concerning the cost of child care services:

- Infant care is usually more expensive than care for older children.
- Some child care centers and some family/group family child care homes offer reduced rates for siblings.
- In-home care is the most expensive form of child care. When you have full time in-home care, you must pay at least minimum wage if the provider works more than 20 hours per week (many in-home providers set their fees well above minimum wage), time and a half for over 40 hours, social security, unemployment tax and workers' compensation.
- Some child care programs will require a security deposit or registration fee when you register your child.
- Some programs have extra fees for materials, transportation, lunches, or late pick-ups.
- Request receipts for all fees paid.
- Be sure to ask for the Tax ID number for your tax purposes.

Warning Signs of Poor Child Care

Even after you have selected good child care, continue to monitor and observe the care your child receives. The quality of a program can vary greatly over time due to staff turnover or other factors. Here are some danger signals to check on immediately.

1. Parents are not allowed to drop in unannounced at all times of the day. You are required to call before coming to pick up your child at a different time or before visiting.
2. Parents must drop off a child at the front door/entrance and may not come into the caregiving areas.
3. After several months, your child continues to be unhappy about going to the child care facility, or your child suddenly becomes unhappy after she seems to have adjusted. This may or may not be a danger signal since children often have problems with separation, but should be attended to.
4. Your child talks about being afraid or disliking a particular provider, or seems quiet or fearful in her presence.
5. There is frequent staff turnover and you notice unfamiliar people caring for the children when you drop off and pick up your child.
6. The care seems lax and indifferent. You see children being made to wait for long periods of time or left to play unattended indoors and outdoors.
7. Your child has an excessive number of injuries that the provider cannot explain adequately.
8. The provider's voice or manner seems harsh, rude, or indifferent toward any of the children.
9. There are insufficient toys for the children to play with or few interesting activities to do. Toys may be put on display but not used regularly by the children.
10. When you express any concern, the provider becomes upset or defensive and cannot discuss the matter rationally with you.
11. You feel uneasy about the care, lack confidence in the providers, or find yourself worrying about how your child is doing. A visit to spend time with your child and observe what her life in care is like should reassure you.

Resources

A copy of the regulations is available at each regulated child care site, at Child Care Resources of Rockland and at the NYS Office of Children and Family Services website at www.ocfs.state.ny.us.

For more information on selecting child care contact a Family Connections Specialist at (845) 425-0009.

To learn more or to find a program accredited by:

NAEYC visit www.naeyc.org

NAFCC visit www.nafcc.org

AfterSchool Works! NY visit www.afterschoolworksny.org

Licensing Violations

You may discover that your child care program is not complying with licensing requirements and the violations appear to be serious. For the safety of all children, be sure to report any serious violations to the licensing authorities and/or to Child Care Resources of Rockland. The referral service will supply the licensing complaint hotline number. It is through the responsible actions of parents in this manner that the quality of child care programs can be maintained. The referral service can also help you consider a new child care arrangement. If you have any questions please call us at (845) 425-0009 or the Spring Valley Regional Office of the NYS Office of Children and Family Services at (845) 708-2400.

Child Abuse and Maltreatment

It is unlikely that you will encounter child abuse or maltreatment. However, don't rule out the possibility. If your child is reluctant to go to child care, there are many possible reasons. Listen to what your child says and take what he or she says seriously. Look for signs of stress in your child. Compare notes with the other parents and find out as soon as possible if other children are expressing similar feelings and reactions to the provider. If you do suspect abuse, do not hesitate to report it to the New York State Abuse and Maltreatment Register at 1-800-342-3720. Be sure to also inform Child Care Resources of Rockland of your suspicion.

If you have concerns about a child care provider, call the Child Care Complaint line at 1-800-732-5207.

To report a child in imminent danger, call 911.

Child Care Resources of Rockland Mission and Vision

With today's pressured lifestyle, giving children the best they deserve is more challenging than ever. Child Care Resources of Rockland, Inc. can help.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to promote, support and enhance the healthy development of all children by:

- Providing resource and referral services for families seeking accessible, affordable, quality early childhood and school age care and education.
- Offering training, support and resources to the early care and education workforce, as well as public and private schools.
- Connecting with business leaders and public officials to emphasize the value of quality child care and its contribution to the economic vitality of Rockland County.
- Advocating for increased investment in quality child care and education.
- Collaborating with strategic partners to enhance our collective abilities to address the needs of the community now and in the future.

Vision Statement

Child Care Resources of Rockland, Inc. believes that all children deserve quality child care and early education. By supporting our children from birth through the school years, we build an essential foundation for our families, schools, businesses and communities. CCRR is recognized as the leading resource for quality child care and early education services, providing leadership, guidance and information for our community, partners, business leaders and elected representatives.