

Community Action



Child Care Information Service

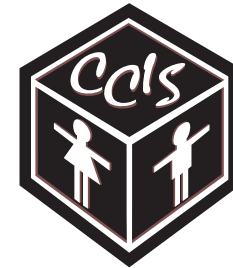
2475 Center St NE
Salem, OR 97301

Phone: 503-585-2491
Outside Salem: 1-800-289-5533
Fax: 503-375-7580
E-mail: ccis@open.org
Website: www.open.org/ccis

Child Care Information Service

HOW TO FIND CHILD CARE

Mid-Willamette Valley Community Action Agency, Inc.



- Parent consultations and child care referrals
- Information on how to select quality child care
- Technical assistance and training for child care providers
- Information on employer supported child care and work/life benefits

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How do I build a good relationship with my provider?

- Be respectful, show your provider that you appreciate her or him. A quick note or card (from you or your child) is a wonderful way to say "thank you."
- Talk to the provider about your child's day – ask how the provider's day went, too.
- Offer to volunteer time when needed to help fix broken toys, to attend field trips, or during cleanup days.
- Make sure your child is wearing suitable clothing (depending on the weather) – an extra change of clean clothes would be good, too.
- Let your provider know if you will be late picking up your child – many providers have family activities or classes to go to after the child care program closes for the day.
- Let your provider know if you have any questions or concerns. The provider may also have some concerns to share with you. Remember, you both want what is best for your child.
- Let your provider know if there are changes happening in your child's life.
- Remember your provider's birthday, or other special events in your provider's life to let them know how much you appreciate them.

What happens if my child is sick?

By law, sick children are not allowed in a group child care setting. If your child is not feeling well or is sick (except for mild cold symptoms), your child care provider is not allowed to care for your child. You or someone else may need to stay home with your child. ***Start thinking now about backup care.***

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Does anyone inspect family child care homes and child care centers?

A. Yes. Centers and Certified Family Child Care homes are inspected on a yearly basis by the Child Care Division (CCD), Health Inspector, and Fire Marshall. Newly registered or renewing Family Child Care Providers receive a Health and Safety Review from CCD. The review is a modified and less extensive version of the center inspection, and happens every 2 years. This includes having a criminal background check on the adults living in or frequently visiting the household. It is always the parent's **responsibility** to inspect and choose the provider that is best for their family.

How many children can someone take care of?

Registered family child care providers:

Can enroll 10 children between the ages of 6 weeks and 12 years including their own children:

- Up to 6 of those can be preschool age (2 years to entering school)
- 2 of those 6 can be under 24 months
- School age children can also be included as long as the program does not exceed 10 children at any given time.

Certified Family Child Care:

The maximum number of children allowed at any one time is 16, including their own children. Ratios differ depending on the amount and age of children, and may require additional staff for the program to operate. Many certified family providers have additional staff in order to increase the number of infants or toddlers they are able to accept in care.

Child Care Centers:

- 6 weeks of age through 23 months -- 1 adult per 4 children (1:4 ratio) -- 8 maximum
- 24 through 35 months -- 1:5 ratio -- 10 maximum
- 36 months to attending kindergarten -- 1:10 ratio -- 20 maximum
- Attending kindergarten and older -- 1:15 ratio -- 30 maximum

Checklist of Things to Do When

Looking for Child Care:

- Call Child Care Information Service at 503-585-2491 or 1-800-289-5533 (outside Salem) to get at least 3 names of family child care providers and/or centers for you to interview.
- Call at least three child care providers** and compare information in order to make a proper decision on who should care for your children. (See the **list of suggested telephone interview questions in this booklet**).
- Set up a date and time to meet with the child care providers (the provider may want to meet you first, then set up a second meeting with you and your children).
- Take a list of questions to ask the child care provider (see the **section on questions to consider when visiting a child care program**). They may also have some information for you to take home.
- Watch the provider together with your children (or other children). Is she (or he) nice to all the children? Does she give children choices of things to do? Are the children happy? Are there quiet areas available?
- Decide which child care provider will be best for you and your family, and check references. Call the provider to make further arrangements and to fill out any necessary paperwork.
- Build and keep a good relationship with your provider. Pay on time and inform the provider of changes in your child(ren)'s schedule.
- Call the Child Care Division, the licensing agency, to gain insight into whether a child care provider has ever had a founded complaint in their file. The phone number is 1-800-556-6616.

Suggested Telephone Interview Questions

Most child care providers are happy to answer any questions you may have – they will also ask you some questions. Try to include the following questions in your first conversation with the family child care provider or center director (*Be considerate of potential time constraints during child care hours*):

- I have a child, age _____, and I will be needing care from _____ (tell them the times and days you will be needing care). Do you have an opening? (Clarify to see if they are flexible with those hours).
- How many children do you take care of and how long have they been enrolled in your child care program?
- What types of activities and meals do you have planned for children?
- (*Children with special needs*): What is your expertise in serving children with special needs?
- *If they are family child care*: Are you a registered family child care provider?
- *If they are a center*: Are you a certified or licensed center?
- Have you attended ongoing trainings or other classes? What are some examples?

Type of Care	Pros	Cons
Child Care Centers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centers are licensed • Care is usually structured and predictable • Staff will be stable in a well-run center • Usually open year-round 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be less oriented to individual child if group is large • Usually expensive • May have high staff turnover
Family Child Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually reasonable in cost • Family child care is registered with the State • Consistent caregiver and small groups allow close relationships to form 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of care and skills of caregiver vary greatly • May have to find substitute care when caregiver is ill or on vacation
In-home (Nanny or Au Pair)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually very flexible • Child may get more individual attention than in group care • Usually caregiver will care for sick child, so parent does not have to miss work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually most expensive type of care • Parents need to take on responsibilities of an employer, supervise daily activities, keep records, and pay taxes
Relative or Friend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually most affordable • Often flexible hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be conflicts over how to care for the child
School Age Care Before and After School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides safety, adult supervision, and peer companionship • Children supervised after school may be less at risk for social problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost is higher than leaving child alone, to care for self • Some older kids may not like being in an organized program

Employer Supported Child Care

Talk to your employer about employer supported child care. Ask if they have financial assistance plans in place such as:

- ⇒ ***Dependent Care Spending Assistance Plans***—The employer sets aside money from the employee’s gross salary into a non-taxable spending account to pay for child care. The employee is able to pay for child care expenses with tax-free dollars.
- ⇒ ***Flexible Benefit Plans***—also known as cafeteria plans
- ⇒ ***Flex-time and Leave Options***
 - ⇒ *Flexible scheduling*—adjusting your arrival or departure around designated core activities.
 - ⇒ *Compressed time*—Working more hours per day but fewer days per week.
 - ⇒ *Job Sharing*
 - ⇒ *Part-time work*—part-day, part-week, part-month, or part-year work involving prorated pay and benefits
 - ⇒ *Working from home*—Telecommuting or working from home one or more days per week.
- ⇒ ***Child Care Subsidies***—The employer offers workers a child care allowance to use toward a child care arrangement of their choice.
- ⇒ ***Child Care Vendor Plans***—The employer contracts with local child care programs to reserve slots designated for employees of the company.

Call CCIS for more information.

- Are you accredited by a national organization? (*ie...NAEYC for centers or NAFCC for family child care are the two largest accreditation groups that set high standards for programs that achieve this - contributing toward quality child care.*)
- Do you have references for me to call? (*You may also want to ask if you can talk with any parents of children in the child care.*)
- Do you have a contract you use that states the agreement between parents and yourself? Any policies?
- *If you are receiving child care subsidy, ask:* Have you been paid through DHS/Direct Pay Unit before? Are you currently listed with them?
- I would like to drop in and see how my child is doing – do you have any concerns about that? (*Surprise visits should be encouraged by the provider.*)
- *Ask this question after all previous:* What are your current child care rates? Do you have late fees? (*Clarify if they charge a flat rate when your child is absent, or if the provider goes on vacation, etc...*)
- May I schedule a time to come and observe your program and meet you?

Remember, child care is an investment in your wonderful children, it is up to you to choose the right provider for you and your family.

Questions and Information to Consider When Visiting a Child Care Program

Does the provider have a paid or unpaid vacation or holiday schedule?

Ask if the provider has a substitute provider for backup, (when she/he is sick, etc...). (Ask clarifying questions to insure the sub is qualified).

Is there a daily schedule with a variety of activities, in addition to free play, rest time, and individual time? Do you see art projects displayed? Ideally, there would be separate areas for reading, art, dramatic play, baby activities, physical activity, etc...

Ask to see the provider's registration certificate, CPR/1st Aid cards, training certificates if readily available?

How long has the provider been working with children? Do they have children of their own?

What is the ratio of staff to children? How is indoor/outdoor play supervised? Do they have a fenced yard? (Provider is to be within sight and/or sound of the children at all times, even during nap).

Ask about their discipline style – is it the same as yours? (Providers are required to have a written policy). Be aware that child care providers are not allowed to spank or isolate children.

Ask if you can take a close look at the toys and equipment – are they safe and clean? Is there a variety of toys and materials appropriate for the ages of children in care?

Observe the provider interacting with the children. Are they friendly, patient, calm, respectful and warm? Do they listen and respond to each child's needs?

Are they able to provide transportation? How is that done?

Ideally, does the provider belong to a family child care association, PRO Group or other professional organization?

Follow your heart and instincts about the environment:

- Providers and children should be washing their hands often, especially before and after eating, and after using the bathroom or changing diapers.
- First aid kits should be onsite and available.
- Medication should be locked away from children's access.
- Chemicals should be stored and locked away from children and separated from food storage.
- Do not settle on a child care situation if it makes you feel uneasy.
- Is the atmosphere bright and pleasant?
- Is the yard fenced and the outdoor equipment safe?
- There should be enough staff to serve the children, consult with CCIS if you have concerns.
- There should be enough toys and learning materials for the number of children in care.

Count how many children are in care. How many infants, toddlers, preschool age children and compare it to rules and regulations for child care.

Call the Child Care Division, they are the licensing agency that can give you insight into whether a child care provider has ever had a founded complaint in their file. The phone number is 1-800-556-6616.