

GUIDE TO CHILD CARE





CHOOSING CHILD CARE

Choosing a child care program is one of the most important decisions a parent will make for their child. We are here to help you along the way.

When beginning your search for child care, it's important to understand your options. There are many different types of care - some work great for families, while others do not. Make sure to call and visit all types of programs to find the best fit for your family.

We encourage parents, grandparents, and caregivers to visit prospective child care programs; ask questions and make sure you feel comfortable. Use the checklist in this booklet to determine if a program fits all of your needs.

Child care is expensive, but there are ways you can help offset costs. Be sure you can afford the program you choose, and explore all your options for helping to make child care more affordable. See pages 4-5 for more information.

If you are unable to find a child care program that fits your needs or are unsatisfied with the provided list of referrals, please call us so we can broaden or narrow the results based on your family's specific needs. You can reach us at 716-877-6666 ext. 3064 or online anytime at www.wnynchildren.org.

Information in this booklet was obtained from the following sources:
New York State Office of Children and Family Services
Erie County Department of Social Services



Child Care Resource Network

1000 Hertel Avenue, Buffalo, NY 14216

716-877-6666 | www.wnynchildren.org

TYPES OF CHILD CARE

Family Day Care Home

Family Day Care Homes are licensed and registered by New York State. Caregivers and staff members must meet certain education and health & safety requirements. Three to six children can be cared for in a home, when care is given for more than three hours per day. One or two school-age children may come after school. One caregiver is required to be present for every two children under age two.

# of Staff	# Children under 2 years	# Children over 2 years	School-Age	Maximum Group Size
1	2	4	2	8
1	0	6	2	8
2	4	2	2	8
3	6	0	2	8

Group Family Day Care Home

Group Family Day Care Homes are licensed and registered by New York State. Caregivers, assistants, and staff members must meet certain education and health & safety requirements. Up to 12 children can be cared for in a home when care is given for more than three hours per day. Up to four school-age children may come after school. One caregiver is required to be present for every two children under age two.

# of Staff	# Children under 2 years	# Children over 2 years	School-Age	Maximum Group Size
2	4	8	4	16
2	0	12	4	16
3	6	6	4	16

School-Age Child Care

School-Age Child Care serves children from kindergarten through 12-years-old during non-school hours. These programs serve seven or more children at after-school, day care, or in-home settings.

Age Range	Staff per # of children	Maximum Group Size
Five- to nine-years-old	One staff per 10 children	20
10- to 12-years-old	One staff per 15 children	30
Mixed group, ages five- to 12-years-old	One staff per 10 children	20

Day Care Center

Day care centers are licensed and registered by New York State. Children are cared for in larger groups (more than six) in a classroom-like setting and are separated out by age.

Age Range	Staff per # of children	Maximum Group Size	# Staff for Maximum Group Size
6 weeks to 18 months	One staff per four children	8	2
18 to 38 months	One staff per five children	12	3
Three-years-old	One staff per seven children	18	3
Four-years-old	One staff per eight children	21	3
Five-years-old	One staff per nine children	24	3
Six- to nine-years-old	One staff per 10 children	20	2
10- to 12-years-old	One staff per 15 children	30	2

Other Types of Child Care

Head Start

Licensed as a day care center and provides additional services to children and families.

Summer Camps

Meant for school-age children, summer camps are available in centers, daycares, and traditional camps during the summer months when school is out.

Live-in/Live-out Nanny

Unlicensed and unregulated by NYS, nannies are private pay and can watch children in your home or their own.

Pre-kindergarten Programs

Offered by many public schools for three- to five-year-old children during the school year.

Legally Exempt

Grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, friends, or neighbors may apply to become legally exempt providers. These providers can provide care in the child's home and accept county subsidy payments. They can only accept a certain number of children, and while they receive inspections, they are not registered or licensed with the state.

FINDING THE RIGHT FIT



1. Visit the child care program when it is open and children are there.
2. Ask questions: bring along the checklist in this booklet to help you out.
3. Make sure the child care program is licensed or registered with New York State and has enough teachers or staff for the number and ages of children that are present.
4. Talk with parents whose children have attended the child care program. What are their thoughts? Ask them what their experience has been like.
5. Consider how you feel in the child care space. How would your child feel? Feeling comfortable and welcomed is a very important aspect to consider.
6. Make sure the cost of the program is in your price range. If not, consider other programs or means of making child care more affordable.
7. Don't stop until you're satisfied. It's OK to visit multiple programs and call around until you find a child care program that is the perfect fit for you, your family, and - most importantly - your child.

AGE-SPECIFIC TIPS

If you have an infant or toddler, look for these indicators:

- Babies are cared for with a comforting voice and gentle touch;
- Toddlers are fed smaller portions, and mealtime is used for learning skills like self-feeding or using a fork;
- The provider(s) understand that (1) toddlers are just beginning to talk and when upset may bite, hit, kick, or have a tantrum instead of using words, (2) do not know how to share toys, and (3) may get frustrated with an activity and need help finding something else to do;
- The program has soft furniture and toys when toddlers need quiet space and time;
- Children can be seen and heard during naptime, each child has their own napping space and materials, and infants sleep when needed and sleep on their backs;
- Toys are safe and appropriate for infants and toddlers;
- The provider(s) work with parents to help toddlers with toilet use; toileting accidents are handled calmly.

If you have a 3-to-5-year-old, look for these indicators:

- Children have their own napping mat or cot and bed sheets, and quiet activities are planned for children who wake up early or do not nap;
- The provider(s) give children ages 3-to-5-years-old gentle reminders to help them get along;
- Children are encouraged to talk about their feelings and use their words;
- There is enough space and interesting things to play with; the provider(s) help children find something else to do when frustrated with an activity;
- Television and videos are only used for short periods of time and for educational purposes;
- Indoor and outdoor pretend play materials like dress-up clothes, pots and pans, toy tools, and water and sand are available for the children;
- Children are taken outdoors every day unless the weather is bad.

If you have a school-age child, look for these indicators:

- The program is open when school is closed for holidays, school vacations, snow, and half days;
- Transportation is available between school and the program or the program is on-site at school;
- There is a system to keep track of children attending off-site activities such as tutoring, dance or music lessons, or sports activities;
- Snack or meal time is a time for children to talk about their day with friends and the provider(s);
- Children are encouraged to read, write, talk, and ask questions; there is a variety of books and magazines for all ages and reading levels available;
- The use of hand-held electronic games is limited;
- There is a quiet supervised area for children to do homework

INFORMATION

Your Information

Days of care needed: SU M T W TH F ST Time of care needed: _____ to _____

Child(ren) needs medication during care: YES NO Transportation is needed: YES NO

Address near where care is needed: _____

Maximum budget per week: \$ _____

Program 1

Child Care Program: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Type of Care: _____ # of Children: _____ # of Caregivers/Staff: _____

Program 2

Child Care Program: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Type of Care: _____ # of Children: _____ # of Caregivers/Staff: _____

Program 3

Child Care Program: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Type of Care: _____ # of Children: _____ # of Caregivers/Staff: _____

PROGRAM QUALITY CHECKLIST

YOUR NEEDS	PROGRAM 1	PROGRAM 2	PROGRAM 3
You can afford the cost of the child care program.			
Meals and snacks are included in the fee.			
If needed, the program accepts day care subsidy.			
The program is located near your home, work or school.			
If needed, the program provides transportation.			
The program is open the days and times that you need care.			
You feel comfortable leaving your child at the program, and get an overall good feeling from the environment.			
Parents of other children in the program have positive things to say.			

THE CAREGIVER, TEACHERS, AND STAFF	PROGRAM 1	PROGRAM 2	PROGRAM 3
The caregiver has experience caring for children the age(s) of your child(ren).			
The caregiver is certified to give medication and first aid/CPR.			
The caregiver greets parents when the drop-off children at arrival and pick-up children at dismissal.			
The caregiver takes training and/or education courses to learn about the health, safety, and development of children.			
The caregiver allows parents to come into the classroom and participate during holidays, parties, events, etc.			
All caregivers and staff have had mandatory criminal history background and State Central Register for Child Abuse and Maltreatment and Just Center Staff Exclusion List checks.			

THE PROGRAM	PROGRAM 1	PROGRAM 2	PROGRAM 3
Parents are provided with a daily and/or weekly schedule.			
The children are supervised at all times, including naptimes.			
The child care setting is clean, and toys, furniture, and floors are washed frequently.			
Staff and children wash their hands regularly.			
The children spend time outdoors each day.			
There are appropriate spaces for napping, quiet time, active play, and homework.			
There is a variety of safe and clean books, toys, games, materials, and activities that are age-appropriate for your child.			
Televisions are only used for short periods of time for education purposes only.			
There is a written behavior management policy that is given to each parent.			
Children are encouraged to get along with others, talk about their feelings, and use their words.			
The program is accredited by a national organization that recognizes programs who have higher than average quality. <i>i.e. National Association for the Education Of Young Children (NAEYC), National AfterSchool Association (NAA), QUALITYstarsNY, or National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC).</i>			
HEALTH AND SAFETY	PROGRAM 1	PROGRAM 2	PROGRAM 3
The environment is childproofed and dangerous materials are stored out of reach of children.			
There is fencing or other barriers around pools, ponds, and other bodies of water.			
There is a plan for medical and fire emergencies.			
Fire drills and the emergency evacuation plan are practiced with the children regularly.			
The program participates in the federal food program that encourages feeding children healthy foods, CACFP.			
The program is a certified Breastfeeding Friendly program (BFF).			

WHAT IS QUALITY CARE?

Not all child care is equal. While there are different types of care that may work best for certain families, all children need one thing above all else: quality. High-quality care can be measured in a variety of ways, and is often personal or specific to each family. Indicators of quality include:

Health and Safety Routines: The program is licensed or registered by NYS and comply with appropriate child care adult-to-child ratios. Providers and children wash hands before and after meals, diapering or toileting, and the toys, diaper changing area, and other commonly used materials are washed frequently. The environment is free from hazards; outlets are covered, paint is not chipped or peeling, and wires and cleaning supplies are out of reach.

Care Routines: Children and their providers develop relationships by being in the same room each day. Providers respect and accommodate individual sleeping and eating patterns, and encourage children to be independent during meals, toileting, and dressing.

Professionalism: Providers participate in on-going training and education, and stay up to date new rules and regulations. Providers are trained in infant and child CPR and First Aid. Providers have been with the program for a while, and the program doesn't have a high turnover rate.

Working with Families: Families are encouraged to visit whenever possible and accommodate mothers who want to breastfeed throughout the day. Providers and families communicate on a regular basis by talking about or writing down information at drop off/pick up time, and are always willing to answer questions. Programs are respectful of each family's language, culture, and beliefs.

Interactions: Providers show warmth and affection with children and play and interact with them on the floor. They often engage and talk with children about what they are doing and how they feel. Providers quickly soothe children who are sad, upset, or hurt, and help find acceptable ways to express excitement, anger, or frustration.

Learning Environments: Providers have space for children to play on the floor, run, jump, climb, and dance. Providers sing and read with the children, and encourage them to choose who and what they want to play with. There are opportunities for play time outside.

Accreditation: National accreditations bring value and validity to programs, allowing them to be recognized as having higher standards than those required by state or local regulations and licensing. These may include The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC), National AfterSchool Association (NAA), and more.



Child Care Market Rates

Erie County market rates are a guideline of the cost of child care from New York State Office of Children and Family Services. The market rate is based on the county where child care is provided, the type of setting, and the age of the child.

Erie County Market Rates Effective 2019

Day Care Center	\$215-\$280
School-Age Child Care	\$215-\$245
Family Day Care & Group Family Day Care Home	\$175-\$190
Legally Exempt (Group Child Care)	\$161-\$184
Legally Exempt (In-Home Standard)	\$114-\$124
Legally Exempt (In-Home Enhanced)	\$123-\$133



CARE AFFORDABLE

Child Care Subsidy

Child Care subsidies may be available for working families that meet income eligibility guidelines. To determine if you are eligible for child care subsidy, or to start the enrollment process, contact the Erie County Department of Social Services (DSS) at 716-858-8953. Their office is located at 95 Franklin St., Room 449, Buffalo, NY 14202.

Erie County Child Care Subsidy Income Eligibility Guidelines as of August 2021

Family Size	Monthly Income	Annual Income
1	\$2,146	\$25,760
2	\$2,903	\$34,840
3	\$3,660	\$43,920
4	\$4,416	\$53,000
5	\$5,173	\$62,080
6	\$5,930	\$71,160
7	\$6,686	\$80,240
8	\$7,443	\$89,320
+ each additional	\$756	\$9,080

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

WHAT KIND OF HELP IS AVAILABLE?

Child Care Resource understands working families of Erie County and WNY need high-quality, affordable, accessible care and learning for their children. With rising child care costs, this can be a challenge. We're here to help you navigate your way through learning how to pay for child care.

Employer Support

Your employer may provide discounts or have agreements with programs for reduced rates. Many employers offer Dependent Care Assistance Programs, which will allow you to deduct up to \$5,000 a year from your paycheck on a pre-tax basis, for the purpose of paying for child care.

Military Families

If you or a person in your household is in the U.S. Military, your family may qualify for a Department of Defense Military Subsidy. For more information, contact Child Care Aware at 1-800-424-2246.

Head Start & Universal Pre-K

These federally-funded full or part day programs provide free education and other services to help get children ready for school. Eligibility is based on income.

UPK: Contact your local school district for more information.

Head Start/Early Head Start Programs:

CAO of Erie County: 716-881-5150

Holy Cross: 716-852-8373

Tax Credits for Families

Families using any type of care may access tax credits. These credits lower the amount of income tax you have to pay each year. Both the Federal and State government offer credits for parents:

- Federal Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit
- Federal Child Tax Credit
- Empire State Child Credit
- New York State Earned Income Tax Credit

Child Care Program Assistance

See if your child care provider offers scholarships, sliding scale fees, or multi-child discounts.

Student Support

Colleges may have programs that help with child care costs. Contact your college for information.

Local Programs

Discounts may be available at local locations of Boys & Girls Club, YMCA, and similar organizations.

Community Resources

WNY Crisis Services

24-Hour

Anyone of any age who is experiencing a personal, emotional, or mental health crisis can call 24 hours a day. You'll speak with a professional counselor or trained paraprofessional volunteer.

716-834-3131

crisisservices.org/24-hour-hotline/

WNY Poison Control Center

Get assistance with poison emergencies or information. Speak with toxicologists, poison specialists, and RN's.

1-800-222-1222

www.upstate.edu/poison/

Kids Crisis Hotline

Get 24 hour help for emergencies and crisis involving infants, toddlers, preschoolers, school-age youth, and teens.

716-834-1144

crisisservices.org

2-1-1

A free and confidential service that helps people find the local resources they need. Available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Call 2-1-1

www.244.org

Child Care

Resource Network

Get free help finding child care, learn what to look for in a child care program, and find out how to make child care more affordable.

716-877-6666

www.wnychildren.org

Report Child Abuse

Do you know or suspect a child is being abused or neglected? Please report it now.

The Child Abuse Hotline is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The name of the person making the call or report will be kept in confidence.

1-800-342-3720

ocfs.ny.gov/main/cps/



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