

CHOOSING QUALITY CARE

A Guide for Families



Child Care
Resource and
Referral Network

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Choosing Quality Care – A Guide for Families

Choosing an early care and education program for your child is one of your most important decisions. As your child's first and best teacher, you want what's best for them while you're away – a healthy, safe and nurturing environment that will ensure they're prepared for kindergarten and the rest of their educational journey. This guide helps walk you through the many factors you'll want to consider.



Health and Safety

Your child's health and safety are top priority. When selecting a child care program, there are a few health and safety considerations to keep in mind, including cleaning and sanitation practices, ratios and group size and caregiver qualifications.

Cleaning and Sanitation

Child care programs are more likely to protect children from harm and illness if they consistently practice standards such as frequently washing hands, disinfecting diaper changing stations, cleaning toys and properly storing cleaning supplies and other poisonous materials.

Ratios and Group Size

Ratios and group size can affect the quality of care for children in relation to safety, attention given and daily adult interactions. Depending on the age and personality of your child, take a moment to understand which group size and adult-to-child ratio works best for you. Look for opportunities for your child to be independent, work together with caregivers and other children and change activities throughout the day.

Caregiver Qualifications

The amount of experience, education and continuing professional development a child care provider has is an important indicator of quality. The longevity of the teaching staff also contributes to higher-quality care. It shows a welcoming, supportive and positive environment, which may translate into better care for your child.

[Learn more about health and safety.](#)



Types of Child Care

Providers can serve children in a number of environments, from large centers in a commercial setting to small groups in a provider's home. In Indiana, you can find safe, high-quality programs in homes, centers, schools and faith-based early learning settings. Programs can vary greatly, and not all have the same licensing requirements or health and safety standards. Your child's personality and your personal preference may lead you to one type over another.

[Explore the different types of child care.](#)

Paths to QUALITY™ Rating System

Indiana's voluntary quality rating and improvement system is known as Paths to QUALITY™. Programs participating in Paths to QUALITY™ meet specific quality standards within four different levels. Accredited programs meet the highest standards of care.

[Learn more about Paths to QUALITY.](#)

Developmental Milestones

Developmental milestones are the typical skills that children develop in playing, learning, speaking, behaving and moving at specific ages. These milestones have windows of development that most children follow.

[Learn more about developmental milestones at every age.](#)

Developmental Support

Every child — including yours — grows, learns and develops in a unique way. When a child's development doesn't follow the typical path, families have many resources available to get support — and get it early — which is the best time. Talk with your program about the supports they offer. In Indiana, families of children from birth to age 3 can find developmental supports through First Steps.

[Learn more about developmental supports.](#)

Financial Assistance for Child Care

It shouldn't be the only factor in your decision, but cost of care can be important in choosing your program. Many providers offer sliding scale fees, and there are several financial assistance options available to Indiana families, such as Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) vouchers, On My Way Pre-K and Head Start/Early Head Start.

[Learn more about financial assistance for child care.](#)

Family Engagement Practices

Quality programs work closely with families to ensure they are informed about their child's development and are a welcomed partner in their care. They often have an open-door policy, which means family members are free to come and go at any time. A program that provides written policies to include and engage families may be a sign of true family partnership.

[Use this document to engage with your provider about your child and their needs.](#)

Child Care Program Tours

When choosing an early learning program for your child, consider visiting your top three locations in person. It will give you a feel for the program leadership and teaching team, help you visualize where your child will spend their day and allow you to ask any remaining important questions in person.

[Learn more about what questions to ask a prospective program.](#)

Complaint Reporting

Families can review inspection reports and any validated complaints or enforcement actions for licensed and registered Indiana child care programs. To learn about past complaints for a specific program, visit [Child Care Finder](#) and search for a program. The program page will include information about any past complaints.

If you have a complaint and/or concern about a licensed or registered child care program, you can report it to the [Brighter Futures Indiana Solution Center](#) at 1-800-299-1527 or the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration at (877) 511-1144.

[Learn more about reporting complaints here.](#)



What's Best for My Child

A strong relationship between you, your child and your child care provider is key. Use this document to outline your child's strengths, challenges and existing routines. Then plan a time to discuss it with your provider.

Child's Name:	Age:	Date:
Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Name(s):		

	My Child's Strengths	My Child's Challenges	What it Takes to Help My Child Be Successful
Communicating Talking/Listening			
Thinking and Understanding			
Eating and Drinking			
Toileting			
Resting/Sleeping			
Traveling and Moving Around			

What's Best for My Child – cont.

	My Child's Strengths	My Child's Challenges	What it Takes to Help My Child Be Successful
Inside Play Time			
Transition (i.e. moving from one activity to the next)			
Playing with Others			
Outside Play Time (i.e. getting to the playground, utilizing equipment, etc.)			
Fine Motor Activities (cutting, coloring, etc.)			
Gross Motor Activities (running, jumping, riding a bike, etc.)			

Notes:



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