

Finding Quality Child Care: A Guide for Oregon's Families

One of the most important decisions your family will ever make is choosing child care. This guide provides information, resources, and guidance to help you to make the best decision when choosing a child care program that meets the needs of your family. Finding the right program takes time, so start early.

Steps to Finding Quality Child Care

Step One: Understand Your Options

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- Contact 211info child care for child care referrals*
- Learn about the *types of child care*
- Explore getting *help with child care cost*

Step Two: Visit and Ask Questions

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- Visit multiple programs
- Observe and *ask questions* while you are visiting each program

Step Three: Take a Closer Look

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- Consider whether the programs meet your family's needs
- Ask about the programs' participation in Spark (Oregon's Quality Rating and Improvement System)
- Use the *Child Care Safety Portal* to find the compliance history of the programs

Step Four: Choose a Program

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- Stay involved and communicate with the child care program often
- Visit and participate in the child care child program when you can

*Referrals are not recommendations, and families are encouraged to use the above information to help make an informed choice.

Types of Care: Family Child Care Homes and Center-Based Child Care

Providing quality care and supporting your child's development can occur in a variety of settings. There are two main types of care that may fit your family's needs.

Family Child Care Homes

Some families choose family child care homes because they like the family environment and the smaller number of children. Home-based programs may have the same caregiver for your child and might offer more flexible hours for families that need care in the evenings or weekends. Families with multiple children also like that siblings are cared for together.

Center-Based Child Care

Some families choose center-based child care because of the classroom-like environment and larger number of children. Center-based programs may have more adults present in the program and might offer more consistent care hours for families. Families may like that their child is with children of the same age.

Types of Care/Regulation: Licensed and License Exempt The Office of Child Care conducts regular visits to licensed child care programs to ensure each program is following basic health and safety rules. Licensed programs require that staff have ongoing training and background checks. Programs are required to follow rules about the number of staff that need to be present and the number of children that can be cared for at one time.

Some families may choose License Exempt caregivers who provide child care in their homes on an informal basis. These caregivers are not required to be licensed if they care for three children or fewer and may be friends or relatives of your family.

Quality Child Care

Learning is a lifelong process that starts at birth. Quality early care and education programs are important to support your child's development.

Spark is a statewide resource that is improving the quality of child care in Oregon. It is a voluntary system of supports that helps child care professionals build on what they are already doing well, giving children positive experiences. Spark builds on Oregon licensing standards and focuses on key areas which research shows have a big impact on children's growth, health, and well-being.

To find out more about Oregon's Spark visit www.oregonspark.org

Help with the Cost of Child Care

If you need assistance paying for child care, the Department of Human Services (DHS) has programs available. Employment-Related Day Care program (ERDC) is for working families who earn below a certain income level and need child care in order to work.

Additional Resources:

[The Inclusive Child Care Program \(ICCP\)](#) supports access to child care and inclusive child care opportunities for children with diverse abilities and needs.

[Oregon Parenting Education Collaborative \(OPEC\)](#) supports access in Oregon to parenting education.

[Department of Human Services \(DHS\)](#) supports parents needing assistance paying for child care through the [Employment Related Day Care program \(ERDC\)](#).

[Office of Child Care \(OCC\)](#) is responsible for licensing and monitoring child care facilities in the State of Oregon.

