

FOUR STEPS TO FINDING QUALITY CHILD CARE

There are four steps you should use when choosing quality care for your child. Each step is outlined in this brochure. If you would like a more detailed guidebook about finding and choosing quality child care please call 1.877.338.2273 or visit us online at www.qualistar.org to request a copy of *Working Your Way Through the Child Care Maze*.



STEP ONE: LEARN ABOUT YOUR OPTIONS



STEP TWO: VISIT AND ASK QUESTIONS



STEP THREE: TAKE A CLOSER LOOK



STEP FOUR: YOUR CHILD IS ENROLLED! WHAT'S NEXT?

FOR YOUR FREE REFERRAL

1.877.338.2273 • www.qualistar.org

QUALISTAR COLORADO

Qualistar Colorado is a nonprofit organization working to advance quality early childhood education across Colorado. Qualistar partners with parents through our website and a statewide network of Child Care Resource and Referral agencies to help them find quality care that best meets their child's needs. Through our 4-Star Qualistar Rating™ and quality improvement tools and resources, we help child care centers, preschools and family child care homes to improve the quality of care they provide so that all children have quality early learning experiences.

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FIND QUALITY CHILD CARE A FOUR STEP GUIDE FOR PARENTS



WHY QUALITY CHILD CARE MATTERS

Your child's early years are very important. Research tells us that 90 percent of a child's brain growth potential is reached by age 5. We know from almost 50 years of research that children who receive high-quality child care are more likely to go to kindergarten ready to learn and have a greater chance of success in school and life.

As a parent, you must demand the best care for your child. Choosing care for your young child should be a positive experience for your family. Always remember that you are buying a service to meet both your needs as a busy parent as well as the needs of your child.

A child's earliest teachers must respect her, nurture her and help her to learn. It's very important that you choose a provider who reads to your child every day, encourages her curiosity and allows her to explore the world around her.



We Help Parents:

Discover Why Quality Child Care Matters and What it Looks Like • *Find* Answers to Your Child Care Questions • *Get* Resources to Help You Choose Quality Child Care



Qualistar Colorado and your local Child Care Resource and Referral agency are here to help you give your child the best early childhood experience possible.



STEP ONE: LEARN ABOUT YOUR OPTIONS

Contact your local **Child Care Resource and Referral agency for a free child care referral.**

There are probably several child care provider options available in your area. A referral specialist will gather information from you and then offer a list of providers who meet the needs of your family as well as give you other helpful information. For help with finding your local Child Care Resource and Referral agency, call 1.877.338.2273 or visit www.qualistar.org.

Types of Care

There are several options to think about when looking for child care. One setting might be better for your child than another.

Child Care Centers and Preschools: Care is provided in a setting similar to school where there may be many classrooms and children are usually grouped by age.

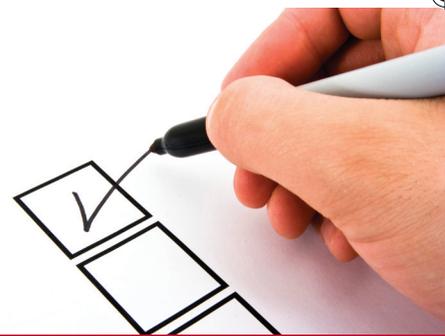
Family Child Care Homes: Care is provided in a home that has been licensed and is regulated by the Division of Child Care.

School Age Child Care: Care for school age children before and after school, on holidays and during the summer is offered by many kinds of programs.

Family, Friend and Neighbor Care*: Care is provided by a family member, friend or neighbor in their home or yours.

Nannies, Au Pairs and Babysitters*: Care is provided in your home by someone you hire. You set the hours, expectations and pay for the job.

*This type of care is not licensed or regulated in Colorado.



STEP TWO: VISIT AND ASK QUESTIONS

Once you have a list of child care providers, the next steps are:

- Narrow your list to three to five providers
- Visit each center or home and take a tour

Questions to Ask

1. Is your program licensed?
2. What is the age range of the children?
3. How many children and teachers are in each classroom or home?
4. How will my child spend his day?
5. What training have you and your staff had?
6. Will I be a part of my child's learning here?

Things to Look For

- Equipment is clean and in good repair
- The doors are locked and visitors must sign in
- The playground has safe surfaces, is fenced and has both sun and shade
- The room is inviting and children are engaged
- Materials and furniture are age appropriate and there are enough supplies for children to either play alone or to share
- Nap and story time are built into the day
- Puzzles, blocks, music and make-believe stations are provided
- Activities are varied and include both outdoor playtime and indoor quiet time
- Teachers use positive language, listen to each child and have shared respect with children
- The classroom reflects cultures and traditions of all the children
- Children have time to choose their own activities
- The teachers attend to children who are upset



STEP THREE: TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

Once you have selected a few child care options that you feel good about, check with the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care to see if there are any other things you should be aware of.

Reviewing Providers' Licensing Files

To make an informed decision, you are encouraged to get information from the Division of Child Care. This information can be found at www.cdhs.state.co.us/childcare by clicking on the tab titled: "Child Care Facility Search" or by calling 1.800.799.5876.

Provider licensing files include:

- Dates and results of inspections
- Information about investigations and complaints
- Number and ages of children allowed to be cared for
- Any restrictions to the license

Look for a Qualistar-Rated Program

The Qualistar Rating™ measures quality in licensed early learning programs, both home- and center-based, that serve children birth-to-kindergarten. The Rating is based on a 4-Star system with a 4-Star indicating the highest quality. Some programs are rated and others are not.



STEP FOUR: YOUR CHILD'S ENROLLED! WHAT'S NEXT?

After you have found a child care provider, the next step is to enroll your child and become involved in his education. Because children are more likely to succeed at learning when their families and teachers work together to support them, it is important that your child care program values partnerships with the families they serve.

To help you determine how your center or home is working to build partnerships with you and your child think about the following.

- Communication with my child's teacher is two-way. She listens with respect to my questions and concerns and will talk with me without my asking first. She tells me about my child's daily activities, behavior and overall progress.
- My child's program has materials to help me with parenting and to answer questions about my child's growth and learning.
- I am encouraged to take part in my child's classroom activities, in advisory groups and in the center's family events.
- I have opportunities to get to know staff and families.
- I receive learning activities from my child's program so that I can help her learn at home.