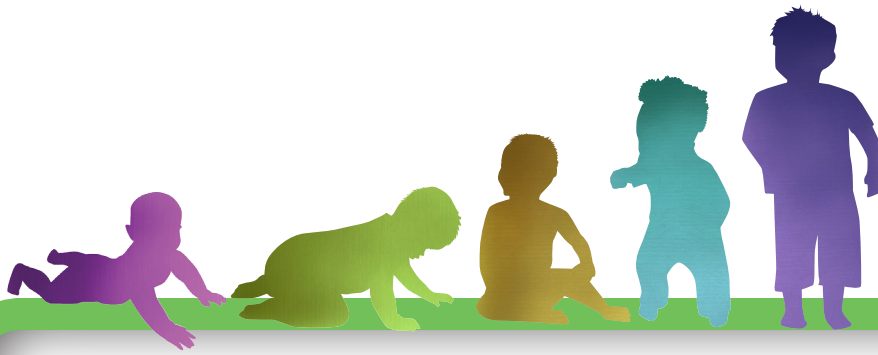


5 Steps

for selecting
care for your
child





5 Steps for selecting care for your child

Selecting an early childhood setting or program for your young child is an important decision you may have to make as a parent or caregiver. You will make the best possible choice for you and your child if you have strong knowledge of what you should expect when you are shopping around for care. If you are looking for care for your child, start with this little 5 step guide. You will learn how to approach the process, what types of care are found in Texas, and how to make a good final choice that meets your needs.

STEP 1

Be sure about what you need:

Depending on your schedule you may need half-day care, partial week care, evening care, or something else. Before searching for care, just be sure you know what you are looking for. This will help you find the best fit for your needs.

programs. To find out if you qualify for child care subsidies, contact your local workforce solutions office. You can locate the closest one to you at <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/dirs/wdas/directory-offices-services.html>. Your local United Way may be a great resource for inquiring about local discounted programs or other resources.

STEP 2

Determine your budget:

What can you afford to spend on care? This is important to know when starting your search. It is also important to consider that you may qualify for child care subsidies or local discounted

STEP 3

Learn about the different types of care available in Texas:

Parents have a lot of options for care in Texas, and to be sure you have the right fit for you, you will need to learn a little about the different types available. The next few pages contain information about many of the different types of care that are available to families in our state.

Types of regulated Child Care in Texas:

Home-Based Care and Child Care Centers

- 1. Listed Family Homes:** Family homes that provide regular child care in their own homes for 1-3 unrelated children. There are no minimum standards, orientation or training requirements for listed homes. They are not inspected unless a report is received.
- 2. Registered Child Care Homes:** Registered Child Care Homes provide care in the caregiver's home for up to six children under age 14; they may also take in up to six more school-age children. The number of children allowed in a home is determined by the ages of the children. No more than 12 children can be in care at any time, including children of the caregiver. Registered homes are inspected every 1-2 years and if a report is received.
- 3. Licensed Child Care Centers and Homes:** All types of licensed operations have published standards they are required to follow and are routinely monitored and inspected. Operations are inspected according to the level of risk associated with deficiencies cited at each inspection and if a report is received related to child abuse/neglect or standards deficiencies. Licensed facilities may include day care and 24-hour residential care.

Public School Prekindergarten

Public School Pre-k consists of full-day and half-day programs, for children ages 3 and 4, operated in local school districts. A child qualifies for Public School Pre-k if he or she meets at least one of the following criteria:

- (1) **is unable to speak and comprehend the English language;**
- (2) **is educationally disadvantaged (Eligible to participate in the National School Lunch Program);**
- (3) **is a homeless child;**
- (4) **is the child of an active duty member of the armed forces of the United States, including the state military forces or a reserve component of the armed forces, who is ordered to active duty by proper authority**
- (5) **is the child of a member of the armed forces of the United States, including the state military forces or a reserve component of the armed forces, who was injured or killed while serving on active duty; or**
- (6) **is or ever has been in the conservatorship of the Department of Family and Protective Services**

If at least 15 children in a district meet at least one of the requirements listed above, the district must provide at least a half-day pre-k program. State funded pre-k is free to children who qualify. Contact your local school district to determine if your child is eligible.

Head Start / Early Head Start

Head Start is a federal program that funds comprehensive services for children and families including education, health, nutrition, and social services. Children from birth to age five from families with low income, according to the Poverty Guidelines (aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/11poverty.shtml) published by the federal government, are eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start services. Children in foster care, homeless children, and children from families receiving public assistance (TANF or SSI) are categorically eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start services regardless of income.

Head Start programs may enroll up to 10% of children from families that have incomes above the Poverty Guidelines. Programs may also serve up to an additional 35% of children from families whose incomes are above the Poverty Guidelines, but below 130% of the poverty line if the program can ensure that certain conditions have been met. Head Start is free for eligible children.

To locate a Head Start Program near you visit <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/headstartoffices>, or call 1.866.763.6481 to speak to a live representative Monday through Friday from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Programs for Children with Disabilities

Preschool Program for Children with Disabilities (PPCD):

A child ages 3-5 with disabilities may qualify for PPCD programs through their local school district. To inquire about your child's eligibility for PPCD, contact your local school district and let them know you would be interested in seeking a referral for your child for the PPCD program.

Child care assistance for children with disabilities:

Some workforce centers offer increased subsidies for children with disabilities, but they are scarce.

To inquire about this type of care, contact your local workforce solutions center. You can locate a center close to you at <http://www.twc.state.tx.us/dirs/wdas/directory-offices-services.html>

Additional Resources

- **Early Childhood Intervention (ECI):**

ECI provides evaluations, at no cost to families, to determine eligibility and the need for services for children ages birth to 3. Families and professionals work together as a team to plan appropriate services based on the unique strengths and needs of the child and family. Services are provided in the home and in community settings such as child care facilities, play groups, and Mothers' Day Out programs. For help in locating ECI services, please call 1.800.628.5115, or search online to find a service or program in your area at dars.state.tx.us/ecis/searchprogram.asp

- **2-1-1:**

Many local communities and non-profits offer services for children with disabilities. To learn more about the local resources around you contact the 2-1-1 system at www.211Texas.org or by dialing 2-1-1

- **Texas Parent to Parent:**

Texas Parent to Parent offers a local program search and resource directory for parents of children with disabilities. Find out more about Texas Parent to Parent at <http://txp2p.org/>



STEP 4

Begin your search:

A great place to start looking for child care is a Child Care Resource and Referral Agency; there may be one in your area. Find out at taccrra.net/. You can also call 2-1-1 or visit www.211texas.org. There you can search for child care in your area. Once you conduct your search, make a list of the options in your area. As noted above, Head Start and Public Pre-k are options for some families, as well.

When you start your search, make sure you have these questions answered first:

- Age of child?
- Full-time, part-time, or irregular time (evening hours)?
- Your budget range?
- Does the care need to be located close to public transportation?
- Does the care need to provide transportation for your child?

The answers to these question will help you narrow down the providers you can select from.



STEP 5

Be a savvy shopper and make your choice:

Like any service or product, you want to get the highest quality product for the resources you have. Once you have identified care that meets your schedule, financial, and other needs, narrow down the list by considering each program's quality.

- Visit the sites and try to get a feeling for them:
 - Does it look clean and safe?
 - Are there nice materials, books, and toys?
 - Do the employees seem happy to greet you and warm?
 - Do the children seem happy and well cared for?
- Do any of the sites have national accreditations or state recognitions? Be sure to ask this directly.
- How large are the classes and what is the staff-to-child-ratio? The younger your child, the more important that this number is low. National accrediting bodies recommend one adult for every 4 infants, and one adult for every ten four-year-olds.
- What are the qualifications of the caregivers? Ask about training and education. Ask what types of special training or certificates the staff has received.
- Have there been major significant licensing violations? Ask this question and visit https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care/Search_Texas_Child_Care/ppFacilitySearchDayCare.asp to verify answers. You can find a history of violations for every licensed program there.

Its not always easy to keep track of each program and your thoughts during your visit, so we suggest making a little chart like the ones on the following pages.

Take the charts with you as you go on your visits. Write down the responses and do some comparisons while you are at home.

Selecting Care for Your Child

Program Name:

Program Address:

Price:

Person you spoke with during your visit:

Phone:

| Questions | Yes or No | Comments: |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Does it seem clean and safe? | | |
| Nice materials and toys? | | |
| People seem happy and friendly? | | |
| Children look happy and cared for? | | |
| Any accreditations or state recognitions? | | |
| How large are the classes and what is the adult to child ratio? | | |
| What are the caregiver qualifications? | | |
| Additional information given? | | |
| Check licensing records? | | |

Selecting Care for Your Child

Program Name:

Program Address:

Price:

Person you spoke with during your visit:

Phone:

| Questions | Yes or No | Comments: |
|--|-----------|-----------|
| Does it seem clean and safe? | | |
| Nice materials and toys? | | |
| People seem happy and friendly? | | |
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| Any accreditations or state recognitions? | | |
| How large are the classes and what is the adult to child ratio? | | |
| What are the caregiver qualifications? | | |
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| Questions | Yes or No | Comments: |
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| Does it seem clean and safe? | | |
| Nice materials and toys? | | |
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| Any accreditations or state recognitions? | | |
| How large are the classes and what is the adult to child ratio? | | |
| What are the caregiver qualifications? | | |
| Additional information given? | | |
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www.littletexans.org