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For additional CHS Family Education Program materials, please call (714) 712-7888. For more information about CHS Early Learning and Education Programs, call (888) CHS-4KIDS.

Family Education Program materials and podcasts, and information on CHS programs can also be found on our website at [www.chs-ca.org](http://www.chs-ca.org).



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C H I L D R E N ' S H O M E S O C I E T Y O F C A L I F O R N I A

# CHOOSING CHILD CARE

MAKING THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR YOUR FAMILY



**Choosing child care is one of the most important decisions a parent can make. Finding the care most suitable for your child will take time, but learning about the types of child care available and what makes a quality child care program will help your search to be successful.**

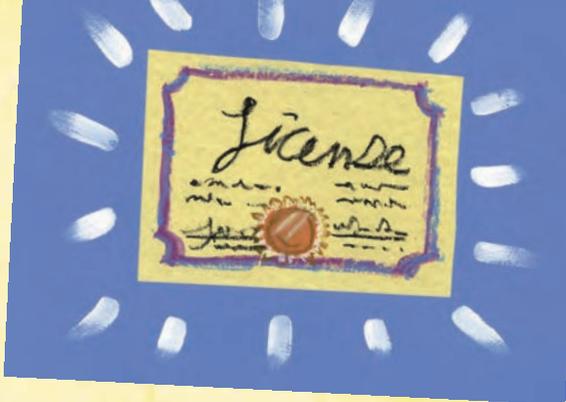


Children's Home Society of California's (CHS) Child Care and Development Services has prepared this guide to assist you as parents to evaluate your child care needs and to help you select a program that will best suit those needs.

We strongly urge you to visit the family child care homes or child care centers under consideration, and to talk to those who will be directly and indirectly involved in your child's care. The more homes and centers you visit, the better prepared you will be to make the best choice for your child.

All family child care homes and child care centers must be licensed by the State of California. Licensing is intended to insure minimal standards of health and safety for children's protection. But licensing alone does not guarantee the quality of a child care center or home. You are the best judge of whether a child care program will be suitable for your child.

If you need additional information to help you choose a child care program, please contact our office at the phone number on the back of this brochure.



## ★ THE RIGHT CHOICE FOR YOUR CHILD

Some important factors or questions to consider when selecting quality child care are:

- What is the education level of the child care providers?
- Is the space safe, bright, attractive, and interesting to children?
- Does the environment allow for a variety of play activities both inside and outside?



## ★ TRUSTLINE

Parents may use TrustLine to find out background information about caregivers who are not currently required by the State of California to be licensed. TrustLine, a public registry maintained by the California Department of Social Services and the Child Care Resource and Referral Network, includes caregivers who have submitted their fingerprints to the Department of Justice and have no disqualifying child abuse reports or disqualifying criminal convictions in California. These "license-exempt" providers include: (1) in-home care in which a caregiver (nanny, babysitter, friend, or relative) provides care for the child in the child's own home and (2) home care in which a caregiver provides care in their home for children from only one other family besides their own. Some before- and after-school programs may also be license-exempt. For more information about TrustLine, call our office at the phone number on the back of this brochure.

## ★ ADULT-TO-CHILD RATIO

An important factor to consider in selecting child care is the adult-to-child ratio.

**Small Family Child Care Homes** are licensed to provide care for a maximum number of 8 children, including the caregiver's own children under age 10. Minimum licensing standards are:

ADULT	CHILDREN	
1	4	Infants (birth-24 months)
1	6	No more than 3 infants
1	8	No more than 2 infants and at least 2 school age* (over 6 years)

**Large Family Child Care Homes** are licensed to provide care for a maximum number of 14 children, including the caregiver's own children under age 10. When care is provided for more than 6 children, an assistant caregiver must be present. Minimum licensing standards are:

ADULT	CHILDREN	
2	12	No more than 4 infants (birth-24 months)
2	14	No more than 3 infants and at least 2 school age* (over 6 years)

**Child Care Centers** are licensed to provide care for children in a group setting. Centers, large or small, can offer full- or part-time infant, preschool, or school age programs. They may be independently operated or connected with a school, church, business, or other organization. Minimum licensing standards are:

ADULT**	CHILDREN	
1	4	Infants (birth-24 months)
1	12	Preschool (2-6 years)
1	14	School age* (6-14 years)

\*One child may be enrolled in kindergarten (as young as 4 years and 9 months). If 2 children are school age, small family child care homes may care for 8 children (instead of 6) and large family child care homes may care for 14 children (instead of 12).

\*\*The adult must meet Community Care Licensing qualifications.

# QUALITY CHILD CARE CHECKLIST



## ★ HEALTH & SAFETY

- Is the facility licensed?
- Are the proper adult/child ratios maintained?
- Is the setting bright and attractive, with adequate space for quiet and active play both indoors and outdoors?
- Are all areas child-proofed and free of hazards and is all equipment safe and in good repair?
- Is the facility clean overall (bathrooms and diapering areas, kitchen, play areas) and is handwashing practiced regularly?
- Are there safe areas for napping?
- Are there working smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, and a first aid kit?
- Is an emergency evacuation plan posted and practiced?
- Are there emergency contact cards for each child?
- Does the caregiver have liability insurance or a waiver of liability?
- Does the caregiver or center staff have up-to-date training in pediatric first aid and CPR?
- Does the caregiver or center use appropriate car seats or safety belts for each child if children are being transported?
- If food is furnished at the facility, is it nutritionally balanced and prepared and stored in a safe manner?



## ★ CAREGIVER'S PERSONAL STYLE

- Is the caregiver someone who is warm, sensitive to children's needs, and who responds lovingly and respectfully to children?
- Does the caregiver give each child individual attention?
- Does the caregiver treat each child in a positive way that builds self-esteem? For example, does the caregiver interact respectfully with children, using a positive tone of voice?
- Is the caregiver accepting of your cultural and family values?
- Does the caregiver have a firm but loving approach to discipline? (Note: Physical punishment, spanking, humiliation, neglect, retaliation, mental abuse, or punitive interference with daily functions of living such as eating, sleeping, or elimination are strictly prohibited in licensed facilities.)
- Is the caregiver willing to discuss your child with you, and are parents welcome to make unannounced visits at any time?



## ★ CAREGIVER'S PROFESSIONALISM

- Does the caregiver have training in child development or early childhood education? (Licensing sets minimum educational standards for child care center directors and staff; no educational training is required for family child care providers at this time.)
- Does the caregiver continue to keep up-to-date by attending trainings and seminars?
- How much experience caring for children does the caregiver have?
- Does the caregiver belong to any professional organizations?
- Are the child abuse reporting procedures provided to parents?
- Does the caregiver use written agreements and clearly communicate the expectations and policies of the program?
- Does the caregiver make available a reference list of current and past clients?



You also have the right and responsibility to request specific information about a licensed child care home or center from Community Care Licensing, California Department of Social Services. Call CHS for the specific phone number and location of the licensing office in your community.

Continue to monitor your child care arrangements at all times. You have the right to visit the child care facility unannounced whenever your child is there. Making such visits is one way to find out for yourself what kind of care your child is receiving. Continue to check the safety of the child care setting and speak to the caregiver about any concerns you have. If you cannot resolve a complaint with the caregiver, report your concerns to Community Care Licensing, Department of Social Services. Remember, you have the final responsibility for your child's care and the right to change child care providers whenever you are concerned about your child's well-being or happiness.

## ★ CHILD CARE REFERRAL POLICY

Children's Home Society of California's (CHS) Resource and Referral (R&R) Program provides child care referrals to parents within CHS's designated service area to all parents requesting services regardless of income level or other eligibility requirements. Referrals are provided to parents based on their specific needs. CHS refers to child care centers, license-exempt child care centers, and licensed family child care homes.

### In order to promote quality child care for children, CHS will:

- Assist parents seeking child care, but will not make recommendations.
- Provide written information about selecting quality child care.
- Recommend that parents visit facilities before making a decision.
- Inform parents of their right to review licensing information about providers.
- Maintain confidentiality of all information received from the parent.
- Operate all programs and services based on the CHS Non-Discrimination Policy.

### CHS reserves the right to discontinue referrals to a child care provider when:

- Licensing, law enforcement, or another regulatory agency has substantiated a complaint involving the health, safety, or personal rights of children; or actions that would impact the care or services to children.
- CHS is informed of an ongoing investigation regarding the health, safety, or personal rights of children; or actions that would impact the care or services to children.
- CHS has received a complaint regarding the health, safety, or welfare of a child and CHS is waiting for a response from the local licensing agency regarding the results of the complaint.
- CHS has been notified by Community Care Licensing (CCL) that the provider has been issued a probationary license or corrective action plan, or the license has been suspended or revoked.

According to the laws of the State of California, CHS will remove from the referral database a licensed child care facility that has been issued a revocation, temporary suspension order, or that is on probation.

CHS will notify the provider in writing when it is determined that CHS will discontinue referrals to the provider because of one of the above items.