

Finding The Best Child Care

McKenzie Pediatrics

What Is "The Best"?

The best child care promotes a child's healthy development in a safe and nurturing environment, where parents are involved, and the caregivers receive ongoing training and support. A caregiver with training in child development is the main ingredient in quality child care. To keep the most qualified people in the field, parents should expect that a child care provider should be paid commiserate with their education and training.

The best child care environments have plenty of space and equipment for learning, for indoor and outdoor activities, and for rest. The best family child care providers operate as small businesses and follow state regulations. The best child care centers have enough qualified staff for your child to receive quality individual attention, and they offer their staff competitive wages and benefits, as well as continuing education opportunities. They should be state-certified, meeting state health and safety requirements, and carry insurance.

What Is Family Child Care?

Family child care is child care offered in the home of the caregiver. Oregon law requires only that they be registered with the state Child Care Division if the caregiver cares for more than 3 children, or for children from more than 1 family. Family child cares may care for up to 10 children, though only 6 may be younger than 6 years of age, and only 2 younger than 2 years of age. Family homes are not inspected by the state.

What Are Child Care Centers?

These are full- or part-time programs, certified as passing state health and safety inspections, and as maintaining specific ratios of staff to children. Staff is also checked for prior criminal and child abuse records. You may call the Oregon State Child Care Division at 1-800-556-6616 to check on a child care center's certification status.

What Should I Look For When I Visit A Child Care Site?

- The caregiver should be warm and responsive to the children
- The caregiver should talk to each child calmly, and respectfully, with eye contact
- The caregiver should appear organized, relaxed, calm, and emotionally engaged
- The children should appear happy, relaxed, and involved in activities appropriate for their age
- The children should appear to feel safe and secure, and receiving lots of individual attention
- The kitchen, bathrooms, and indoor & outdoor play areas should be safe and clean
- There are plenty of book, toys, art supplies, and indoor & outdoor activities
- The caregiver should be interested in you child, and in their needs, routines, likes & dislikes
- Above all else, trust your instinct!! It is usually right.

What Questions Should I Ask?

- Are you certified in first aid and CPR?
- Do you have training in child development, and what prior experience do you have? Can you provide a list of references?
- Are you registered, or certified with the state? Can you provide proof?
- If it is a child care center, what is the staff turnover rate?
- How many children are there, and what are their ages?
- How many adults are there, and what is the adult to child ratio?
- Who else will have contact with my child when they are in your care?
- What hours are you open?
- What are your fees, and what do they include? (Meals, Diapers, Field Trips...?)
- When are fees due?
- How will you communicate with me about my child's developmental progress, discipline, activities, and nutrition?
- Do you have an open-door policy so that I can visit anytime before or after enrolling?
- What would a typical day be like for my child?
- Can you describe the typical mealtime/snacktime routine?
- Do the children watch television? If so, what kind of programs?
- Do you provide activities off-site (eg. Field Trips)? How are the children transported? Do you have car seats for each child?
- Can you describe your approaches to discipline? to toilet training?
- How do you soothe a child who is crying or upset?
- How do you insure that each child receives individual attention?
- What happens when my child becomes ill? What if the caregiver becomes ill?
- How do you insure healthy hygiene practices, and the control of infections?
- Do you keep immunization and health records for all the children?

What Your Child Care Provider Has A Right To Expect From You:

- That you drop off & pick up your child at agreed upon times
- That you call as far in advance as possible if there are any changes in your schedule
- That you make your payments on time
- That you provide extra clothing, a list of your child's likes and dislikes, your child's immunization history, news of any changes in your child's health, a list of numbers where you can be reached in case of emergency, and a list of other adults who can visit or pick up your child

What Types Of Assistance Programs Exist for Child Care?

- Child and Dependent Care Tax Credits...you may be able to deduct part of your child care expenses from your federal & state taxes
- Earned Income Tax Credits...low-income working families may be eligible for these benefits, even if taxes aren't owed, through their federal & state tax filings
- Employer Tax Credits...a state tax credit is available for employers who pay a portion of employee child care expenses. Have your employer call for the [Employer Tool Kit](#) at 1-800-342-6712

Where Can I Call For More Information?

- Oregon Commission For Child Care 1-503-947-1734
- Oregon Child Care Resource & Referral Network 1-800-342-6712
- Oregon State Child Care Division 1-800-556-6616
- LCC Child Care Resource & Referral Service for Lane County 726-3954

