

CHILD CARE GUIDE

Helping Parents
Select Quality
Child Care



Monday-Friday, 8:00 am-5:00 pm

1000 N. West Ave., Suite 310
Sioux Falls, SD 57104
Dial 211 or (605) 339-4357
www.helplinecenter.org

Dear Parent/Guardian:



Obtaining quality child care is very important to families. The thought of finding a quality child care provider can seem overwhelming. All sorts of questions need to be answered. How much will it cost? Is the care giver in a good location? And, most important, is the child care provider of high quality? The Child Care Guide is designed to help you answer these questions along with many others. The topics you will find in this guide are listed below:

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Making lives better by giving support, offering hope and creating connections all day, every day.

211 Community Resources

24-hour information and crisis hotline

Dial 211 or (605) 339-4357

- When you need help finding community information, social services, support groups, donation information, child care, volunteer opportunities or financial assistance
- Resource guides include the Mental Health Guide, Parent Resource Directory and an E-mail Resource Guide

Child Care Resources

Child care resource and referral for parents and providers

- Quick access to current child care openings
- Information on child care issues

Suicide and Crisis Support

Dial 1-800-273-TALK 24-hours a day

- Providing crisis intervention, suicide prevention trainings, suicide information and outreach to families who have lost a loved one to suicide
- Certified by the American Association of Suicidology

Volunteer Opportunities

Linking volunteers with community volunteer opportunities

- Search the web based Volunteer Solutions database of over 100 non-profit agencies and 250 volunteer opportunities
- Serve and Learn Student Association (SALSA) ▪ Business Volunteer Council
- Volunteer opportunities for families, groups and individuals

www.helplinecenter.org

Additional Resources

South Dakota Child Care Services (www.dss.sd.gov/childcare/)

Child Care Services provides assistance to low-income families who need help with child care costs while parents work or attend school. They also provide oversight, technical assistance and support in promoting safe, healthy and caring environments for children through licensing, registration and quality improvement activities. The availability of quality childcare is not only important for maintaining a strong workforce; it is vital for the healthy growth and development of children.

Sanford Children's CHILD Services (www.sanfordhealth.org)

Offers community education to parents and caregivers with a goal of enriching the lives of children from birth to age eight. CHILD services provides a multitude of educational opportunities throughout the year on topics ranging from childhood health to safety and development.

National Association for the Education of Young Children (www.naeyc.org)

NAEYC is dedicated to improving the well-being of all young children, with particular focus on the quality of educational and developmental services for all children from birth to age eight.

Zero to Three (www.zerotothree.org)

Zero to Three supports the healthy development and well being of all infants, toddlers, and their families.

Child Care Aware (www.childcareaware.org)

Child Care Aware is a non-profit initiative committed to helping parents find the best information on locating quality child care and child care resources in their community.

Child Care Bureau (www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb)

The Child Care Bureau is dedicated to the quality, affordability and availability of child care for all families. The Child Care Bureau administers federal funds to states, territories and tribes to assist low-income families in accessing quality child care.

Common Sense Parenting (www.southeasttech.com)

A joint effort between Southeast Tech and the SD Child Protection Office. Classes are on a continual basis and are offered at various times, days and hours. Curriculum is the Boys Town Common Sense Parenting. Topics include Parents as Teachers, Effective Praise, Preventive Teaching, Corrective Teaching, Teaching Self-Control and Putting it All Together.

Where to Start

Step 1: Dial 211 to reach the Child Care Helpline for resources and referrals.

Start looking as far in advance as possible. No matter what type of care you are considering, a child care center or care in someone's home, finding the right child care option can take time. The Child Care Helpline can provide you with child care referrals in your area and answer your child care related questions and concerns.

Step 2: Visit and Ask Questions

Make sure you visit the child care providers you are considering. Look for these key indicators of quality:

- Adult to Child Ratio
 - The fewer the children for each adult, the more individualized care your child will receive.
 - Overall, child care centers have larger numbers, but children are split up in smaller groups according to their age.
- Provider Qualifications
 - Providers with degrees and/or special training in working with children will be more able to help your child learn and develop.
- Turnover
 - It's best if children can stay with the same provider for at least a year.
 - This will help ensure stability and consistency, which will promote healthy development and the overall well-being of a child.

Step 3: Make a Choice

Think about what you saw at each visit, and make the best choice for your child and family.

Step 4: Stay Involved

The work isn't over when you find good care for your child. You and your child's caregiver are partners now. Here are some ways to stay involved:

- Have parent-provider meetings regularly and ask questions.
- Offer to volunteer time when needed.
- Stop in and visit when you can.
- Participate in special events and holidays.

Visiting and participating in events at your child's provider sends a strong message. It tells your child and your child's provider that you think what your child is doing and learning is important.

Defining Quality Care

Every family would probably define the term “quality” child care somewhat differently. For the parent of an active four year-old, quality might mean a program that has lots of outdoor space and equipment, as well as tolerance for fast-moving tricycles! A mother of a shy three year-old might find quality in a soft spoken, relaxed teacher who exudes warmth and acceptance.

“Quality” is a term that is hard to define, but there are some universal characteristics of good child care programs. In quality child care programs, you will find the following:

- Interesting and varied materials and equipment that are age appropriate and accessible to the children.
- Providers who are responsive and sensitive to children’s needs and who provide constant supervision.
- Activities that offer social interaction and are intellectually, as well as physically, challenging.
- Discipline techniques that help children learn appropriate behavior while showing respect and caring.
- An environment that is clean and safe.

You are most likely to find quality in programs where:

- The providers are trained in child development.
- The providers are dedicated to ongoing training and education in child care.
- The provider follows appropriate staff to child ratios.
- Information is shared between providers and parents.
- The environment is attractive and nurturing to the children and teachers.
- The daily activities are based on the children’s needs and interests.

Checking Out Your Options

There are pros and cons associated with each type of care. The following provides you with comparisons at a glance.

Child Care Center

- Same ages group together
- Larger groups
- More adults to provide care
- Back-up care may not be necessary
- Usually more expensive
- Some centers experience high staff turnover
- Educational programs and planned activities
- School-like atmosphere
- Training required
- Highest risk of exposure to illness
- Most opportunity for public observation and monitoring

Family Child Care

- Mixed Ages
- Smaller group
- One adult providing care
- Back-up care necessary
- Usually less expensive
- With one provider turnover may be less likely
- More spontaneous and individualized
- Home-like atmosphere
- Training required
- Less risk of exposure to illness
- Less opportunity for public observation and monitoring

As a parent you will have your own standards. Deciding which program is best for your child and family is up to you. It’s very important for you to visit the facility, observe and ask questions. Ultimately, listen to your own gut feelings. Are you comfortable leaving your child there? If the answer is not a confident “yes”, look elsewhere.

Checking Parent References

Calling references is an important way to get more information. You would be well advised to pass on any provider who cannot or will not give you names of other parents.

Ask for names of two to four parents who are using or who have used the provider in the past. Friends and neighbors may be able to vouch for the person's character but cannot tell you much about the actual care.

Introduce yourself: "My name is _____. I am considering using _(provider's name)_ as my child care provider. _(provider's name)_ gave me your name as a reference. Would you be willing to take a few minutes to answer a few questions?"

Possible questions to ask:

- How long have you known the provider and in what capacity?
- Tell me about the strengths and weaknesses of this provider/program.
- Was there staff turnover and if so how was it handled?
- Did you have any concerns about the provider? If so, did the provider listen?
- How was discipline handled?
- What are the reasons you stopped care?
- Would you recommend this child care program?

Listen to what is and isn't said. Silence and hesitation can speak volumes. Find a non-threatening way to probe a little deeper if an answer puzzles or disturbs you. While programs are naturally going to give you names of "glowing" references, don't assume that all you are going to hear is praise. Even people who love their child care provider may tell you something which will help you decide if the program will or will not work for your child.

Provider Licensing Requirements

In the state of South Dakota, there are four different types of care that are regulated. They are: 1) child care centers 2) group family day care homes 3) family day care homes and 4) before and after school centers. In each type of care, there will be advantages and disadvantages. The following pages outline some of the requirements.

Licensing is the certification that applies to day care centers, group family day care homes and before and after school centers. If anyone cares for more than 12 children, licensing is mandatory! Licensing is completed with the Dept. of Social Services, Division of Child Care Services, (605) 367-5444 ext. 5.

Registration is the certification that applies to family day care homes, which is a voluntary process. A registered provider cannot care for more than 12 children. Family child care providers can become state registered with the Dept. of Social Services, Division of Child Care Services, (605) 367-5444 ext. 5.

City of Sioux Falls Registration mandates that any child care provider who cares for 12 or less children in their home for any form of compensation is required to register with the Sioux Falls Health Department at (605) 367-8760. If a provider is outside the city limits, they are not required to be registered with the City of Sioux Falls.

CHILD CARE CENTER (21 or more children)

Ratio: 0-3 years=5 children: 1 adult
3-6 years=10 children: 1 adult
6-14 years=15 children: 1 adult

Fire, Health & Safety

- Written evacuation plan posted and fire/tornado drills are conducted
- Exact square footage per child required
 - 35 sq. ft per child indoors and 50 sq. ft of outdoor play space
- Individual fire and health inspections
- Fenced in playground area

Education Level

- An Associate Degree, or a Child Development Associate (CDA) or a Bachelor's Degree in a child related field and experience is required for the director of the center.

Staff Training

- 20 hours of in-service training a year including CPR and First Aid

GROUP FAMILY DAY CARE (13-20 children)

- Ratio:** 0-3 years=5 children: 1 adult
3-6 years=10 children: 1 adult
6-14 years=15 children: 1 adult

Fire, Health & Safety

- Written evacuation plan posted and fire/tornado drills are conducted
- Exact square footage per child is required
 - 35 sq. ft per child indoors and 50 sq. ft of outdoor play space
- Individual fire and health inspections
- Fenced in playground area

Education Level

- An Associate Degree, or a Child Development Associate (CDA) or a Bachelor's Degree in a child related field and experience is required for the director.

Staff Training

- 10 hours of in-service training a year including CPR and First Aid

FAMILY DAY CARE (Up to 12 children, registered)

Ratio

- No more than 12 children, including the provider's children under 6 years old.
- Only four children can be under the age of two, with only two of these children being under the age of one.

Fire, Health & Safety

- Operating smoke detectors and fire extinguisher
- Written evacuation plan
- Conducts fire and tornado drills

Education Level

- No specific requirements for education

Staff Training

- 6 hours of in-service a year including CPR. First Aid is required within the first year of registration

Maintaining a Good Relationship With Your Provider

Maintaining a good working relationship with your child care provider is vital. As a parent, you want the best quality care for your child and you want it to continue to be of the highest quality. In order to achieve this, it is extremely important to keep the lines of communication open. The following suggestions should help you build a successful child care partnership.

- Know the terms of your contract before you start care: the pick-up and drop-off times, when to pay and the fee amount, holidays, sick days, emergency procedures, where you should park, what door to enter and where to put your child's belongings.
- Share information about your child's likes and dislikes and any specific routines.
- Make sure that the provider can always reach you or another familiar adult.
- Inform the provider about things that may be affecting your child's behavior or feelings (sickness, an upcoming trip, visits by relatives, sleepless nights, a sick pet, change in family status, etc.).
- Establish a regular time to talk besides during drop-off or pick-up times. Regular monthly or quarterly meetings/check-ins are a time for a more detailed conversation about your child. Listen to your provider's feelings about your child. She or he may have important insights that you may find helpful.
- Bring up any problems or concerns PROMPTLY but not in front of your child. Set aside time and be specific about concerns.
- Get involved/offer to help! Be available for special events, provide snacks, loan a toy, or drop in on your lunch hour.
- Let your provider know you appreciate the care your child is receiving.

REMEMBER: The most important factor in maintaining a positive relationship with your provider is communicating honestly and openly. When this occurs, everyone will benefit from the child care experience.

Understanding Your Child's Needs

Before you begin your search for child care, think about your child's stage of development. Knowing your child's strengths and needs will help you in choosing a child care program.

Infants have unique and personal rhythms, strengths, styles and needs. Some infants are adaptable, while others are cautious or challenging. Some react to the world by not holding back, some are quiet watchers. Activity levels vary for babies from high to low, as does their tolerance for change. Some babies are social and interactive, while others need time to warm up. Infants are developing faster now than they ever will. Everything they do has an effect on their growing brain. Caregivers need to provide a stable, yet flexible schedule that meets the individual needs of your baby. Babies need to be cuddled, carried, spoken to, stimulated and loved.

Toddlers are growing at a fantastic rate and have many important issues to learn about and resolve. Toddlers' worlds are expanding rapidly as they become mobile and verbal. They are discovering that words have power, that the ability to walk offers the possibility of walking into danger, and that adults have become interested in their learning about toileting. They are struggling every day with a drive toward independence; to grow, to be in charge, to do things for themselves. At the same time, they are still very dependant on adults. These issues of power and control contribute to what some call "the terrible twos," but a caregiver who understands and enjoys toddlers can make this stage the "terrific twos."

Preschoolers are enthusiastic, outgoing and eager to try new things. They are curious about the world around them, questioning how and why things work, experimenting with new words and forming new friendships. Through playing with materials and their friends, the preschooler learns new information and works out normal fears and fantasies. Routines are critical in their daily schedule in order for them to feel comfortable and safe in exploring and learning. Enough time to adjust to new situations is important for this bunch.

Young School Age children seem to have settled down to a steadier pace of growing and learning. They are interested in real-life tasks and activities. Doing things together with friends, teamwork and following rules becomes important.

Older School Agers have a deeper sense of self; social acceptance and achievement become priorities. They begin to see authority figures as imperfect human beings, and feel they do not need adult supervision. School and community influences become more important to them than home and family priorities.

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL (More than 13 children)

Ratio: 5 years-14 years=15 children: 1 adult

Fire, Health & Safety

- Individual fire and health inspections
- Written and posted evacuation plan
- Conducts fire and tornado drills
- Exact square footage per child required
 - 25 sq. ft. of indoor play space and 50 sq. ft. of outdoor play space

Education Level

- A Bachelor's Degree in education or human development, or a valid Child Development Associate (CDA) and one year experience, or two years of college coursework in education and one year experience, or have four years of experience.

Staff Training

- 10 hours of in-service training a year including CPR and First Aid

CITY OF SIOUX FALLS FAMILY DAY CARE (Up to 12 children)

Ratio

- No more than 12 children, including the provider's children under 6 years old.
- Only four children can be under the age of two, with only two of these children being under the age of one.

Fire, Health & Safety

- Operating smoke detectors and fire extinguishers
- Written and posted evacuation plan
- Conducts fire and tornado drills

Education Level

- No specific requirements for education

Staff Training

- 6 hours of in-service training a year including CPR and First Aid

Preparing Your Child For Child Care

A new child care experience, whether it is the first one or a different one, is a common one for many children. Below are some ways that you can make this change easier for your children and yourself.

Talk with your child about what is happening.

New experiences can be scary. If your children are able to understand, you can ease a lot of fears by talking to them about going to child care. Let them know what is different about the new situation, as well as what is the same. Children need to know that they will come home at the end of the day to a family where they are loved. A good book to read to your child as you prepare them for child care is *Going to Daycare* by Fred Rogers.

Share your positive attitude about child care with your child.

Your child will feel good about going to child care if you feel good about your decision. Talk with your child about the toys, people, and activities they will experience. Let your child know that going to child care can be fun.

Begin new child care situations gradually.

It's frightening to be put into a new situation. You can help ease the transition by visiting the child care program together a few times before your child starts. You may find it helpful to spend time at the child care site yourself. Your presence will be comforting. Work together with the provider in creating a smooth transition to the child care routine. The provider can also help your child adjust to the new situation.

Establish good communication with your provider.

Leaving a child in child care can be hard for parents. Let your provider know as much as possible about your child. A quality provider will take your child's unique characteristics into consideration as they care for them.

Help your child with transitions.

Transition time is when parents and children separate in the morning and return together in the evening. When child care is new, transition time can be very difficult not only for parents and children, but also for the providers. Children need to learn to trust the new situation and to understand that their parents are not abandoning them. Children need to know that you will return.

Expect a reasonable amount of adjustment time.

Every child is different. Some children will adjust almost immediately and others may take several months. Check in with your provider to see how things are going with your child.

Matching Your Child's Style to the Right Child Care Setting

How social is your child?

Super-Social

- Children are always on the go
- Enjoy approaching new people
- Are happiest interacting with others

Look for opportunities for group play, individual schedules, exploration and physical play.

Take-It-Slow

- Children sit quietly, exploring through their eyes and ears
- Are shy around strangers
- Need time to warm up

Look for programs that allow children to choose when they'd like to play with others.

Is your child tolerant of changes and challenges?

High-Tolerance

- Aren't bothered by changes
- Cope well with frustration

Look for mixed-age settings that offer enjoyable challenges

Low-Tolerance

- Are sensitive to change
- Are easily frustrated, impatient

Look for same-age settings with developmentally appropriate toys and activities.

Matching Your Child's Style to the Right Child Care Setting

What is your child's personal style?

Adaptable

- Flexible
- Good with transitions
- Approaches new people/situations with ease

Look for large group settings providing social interaction and new experiences.

Cautious

- Thoughtful
- Has difficulty with transitions
- Approaches new people/situations cautiously

Look for small group settings that are less overwhelming.

Challenging

- Passionate, feels things intensely
- Has difficulty controlling his/her strong feelings, wants and needs

Look for programs where each child has a primary caregiver, someone who knows and understands your child.

How does your child react to the world?

Big Reactors

- Communicate their feelings and don't hold back

Look for providers who respect your child's emotions, but help him/her to express them in a more controlled way.

Low Reactors

- Fuss very little, play quietly and sleep a lot

Look for providers who gently introduce new activities.

What Questions Do I Ask?

There are many things to consider during the interview and visit to the child care settings. Here are some important items to ask or observe:

Health and Safety

- Are you registered with the City of Sioux Falls?
- Are you registered with the State of South Dakota?
- What are your emergency procedures?
- What precautions are taken to reduce the spread of illness?
- What meals/snacks do you serve?

Space/Environment

- How many children are in your care? What are their ages?
- Where will the children sleep, play and eat?
- How are children supervised at all times?

Activities and Materials

- What would a typical day look like for my child?
- What types of activities will my child be doing?
- How often do you read with the children?
- How will you plan activities to promote my child's development?
- Do you limit TV watching? What are some programs that my child might watch?

Provider

- What forms of discipline do you use?
- What is your philosophy on providing child care?
- How do you settle disputes?
- If you had concerns about my child's behavior or development, how would you approach me?
- Ask "What If" questions. (What if my child hits you? What if my child bites another child? What if my child won't take a nap?)

Training/Experience

- How long have you been working in child care?
- What training/education do you have?
- Do you have CPR and First Aid training?
- What do you like about working with children?
- How long do you anticipate providing child care?

Program Management

- Can I drop in any time unannounced?
- Please explain your written policies and contract.
- How will we build effective communication?
- Are parents encouraged to become involved with the program? How?

Child Care Checklist

Place a check in the box if the program meets your expectations.

Will my child be supervised?

Are children watched at all times? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Is the provider warm & welcoming? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Are positive guidance techniques used? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Does the provider avoid yelling, spanking, & other negative punishments? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Do the caregiver/teacher-to-child ratios follow the recommended guidelines? 0-3 years=5 children:1 adult 3-6 years=10 children:1 adult 6-14 years=15 children:1 adult Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	

Has the provider been trained to care for children?

If a center – Does the director have a degree & experience in caring for children? Do the teachers have a credential or Associate’s degree & experience in caring for children? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	If a family child care home – Has the provider had specific training on children’s development & experience in caring for children? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	
Is there always someone present who has current CPR & First Aid training? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Are the providers continuing to receive training on caring for children? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Have the providers been trained on child abuse prevention and reporting? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>

Child Care Checklist

Place a check in the box if the program meets your expectations.

Will my child be able to grow and learn?

Are there age appropriate toys and activities for your child? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Is the play space neat and organized and are materials easy to use? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Will the activities stimulate your child to learn and develop? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Has the provider planned learning experiences for your child to enjoy? Are there daily/weekly plans available? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Does the provider talk with the children & engage them in conversation? Does the provider read to the children and encourage them to read if they can? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	

Is this a safe and healthy place for my child?

Are hands washed after using the bathroom, diapering, eating, etc? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Are medicines labeled and out of reach? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Do all children have required immunizations? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Are first aid kits readily available? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>
Are changing surfaces cleaned & disinfected after each use? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Is the outdoor area safe and/or fenced in? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Are toys disinfected on a regular basis? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>	Is there a plan for responding to disasters? Program 1 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 2 <input type="checkbox"/> Program 3 <input type="checkbox"/>