

CHECKLIST FOR SAFE, QUALITY CHILD CARE: CENTERS

Quality child care in the early years helps create a strong foundation for children's lifelong success!

Families in Colorado have choices when it comes to child care. No matter what kind of care you decide on, use this checklist to make sure the program is safe and will provide quality care to support your child's early learning and development.

Types of Child Care

Family Child Care Home

Care that takes place in the home of the child care provider and serves more than four children on a regular basis; must have a Colorado child care license.

Child Care Center

Care that takes place in a dedicated school building or community center; includes Early Head Start and Head Start; must have a Colorado child care license.

License-Exempt Child Care

Three types of child care situations do not require a license (license-exempt). License-exempt child care includes care provided by a family member, friend or neighbor.



NEED SUPPORT TO FIND CHILD CARE? WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

STEP 1: LEARN ABOUT YOUR OPTIONS



Search for a licensed family child care home in your community at [ColoradoShines.com](https://coloradoshines.com). For each program, you'll find details about its licensing history, inspection reports, and if any complaints have been filed against the program.



Families can also call the Colorado Shines Child Care Resource and Referral Line to connect with a friendly navigator for one-on-one help to find child care. Call **1.877.338.2273** or [complete this online form](#).

YOU MAY QUALIFY FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO HELP PAY FOR CHILD CARE!

The Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) supports families with lower incomes to pay for quality child care.

[Learn more about income requirements and find out if you qualify for financial support through CCCAP.](#)

STEP 2: VISIT, OBSERVE AND ASK QUESTIONS



The best way to learn about a program is to visit in person. You can talk to the teachers, observe how the provider and children interact, and see for yourself the learning environment that your child would spend time in.

When visiting child care centers, use this checklist as your guide.

CHILD CARE CHECKLIST: CENTERS

Name of Program/Director: _____ Date of Visit: _____

- Is the program licensed by the State of Colorado?
- What training has the director and teachers completed?
- What are the hours? Are the hours flexible?
- Is there a list of current parents to contact for a reference on the program?
- What days is the program closed for holidays or teacher training?
- How is the program prepared for a medical emergency or another crisis?
- What is the age range of the children in the program?
- What kind of regular communication does the program provide to families?
- What is the teacher-to-child ratio?
- How can families can participate in the program?
- What is the daily schedule of activities?
- Does the program have a parent handbook with policies to review?
- How does the program support children with special health care needs?

Safe Sleep for Infants

If you have a baby, make sure the program adheres to these practices proven to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

- All infants are put to sleep on their backs.
- The sleep spaces have a firm surface, like a mattress in a crib, covered by a fitted sheet with no other bedding, bumpers, blankets or stuffed animals.
- Teachers are trained on safe sleep.
- Infants have their own sleep space that is the same every day.
- Infants do not sleep in swings or car seats.
- Teachers can see/hear infants at all times, including during sleep.
- Teacher regularly checks on infants during sleep.



Things to Look For...



Health and Safety

- Licensed and in good standing with the State.
- Supplies and equipment are clean and work well.
- Electrical outlets are covered.
- Emergency route and emergency numbers are posted.
- Doors are locked and visitors must sign in.
- The program space is clean and uncluttered.
- All toys are clean and in good condition.
- Playground has safe surfaces, is fenced in, and has both sun and shade.
- The playground is inspected regularly for safety.
- The program can accommodate my child if they need medication?

Daily Activities

- Nutritious meals and snacks are served.
- Nap and story time are part of every day and a daily schedule is posted.
- Puzzles, blocks, music and make-believe materials are available.
- Children have time to choose their own activities.
- Adults encourage independence and help children learn new skills.
- A variety of activities includes outdoor playtime and indoor quiet time.

Learning Environment

- Each child has a safe place to sleep, a place to store their things, and the space is warm and inviting.
- The children appear happy with adults and with other children.
- The furniture is child-sized and materials are at the children's level.
- Materials are appropriate for children's ages, and there are enough to go around.
- Different cultures, traditions, and students with special needs are seen in the classroom.

Provider/Child Interactions

- Teachers speak to and treat the children warmly and respectfully.
- Teachers get down to the child's level when talking with them.
- Teachers listen closely to each child and are encouraging and positive when speaking with them.
- Children are asked questions and not just given directions.
- Teachers quickly respond to and care for children who are hurt or upset.