

THE FAMILY GUIDE

To Selecting Quality Early Learning Programs



A Parent's Guide to Child Care



OFFICE OF

Early Learning

LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE

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A MESSAGE FOR FAMILIES

Be A Smart Shopper

Choosing an early learning program for your child is one of the most important and difficult decisions you will ever make. This guide will help you make choices about quality programs so you can find the best match for you and your child.

Visit several child care providers before making a decision. On your visits, observe and talk with the teachers and children in the program. The teachers should be caring, qualified and well organized. Read the rules and policies about fees, meals, discipline, illness, attendance and emergencies. Ask the staff to talk about their views on child development and about the daily activities they organize for the children. Walk around and look at the whole program area; be certain you like the program and the staff, and you will feel happy with your child’s experience with this provider.

Choose Wisely

The right early learning program helps your child learn new skills and develop socially. Look for a positive and caring relationship between teachers and children. Make sure the teacher is someone you can talk with comfortably and trust. When you walk into the child care center or home, the atmosphere should be cheerful and safe. The children should be having fun and the program should include experiences and activities you think are important for your child. Above all, you want to choose a program where your child will be safe and happy—and where your ideas about parenting will be supported.

Do Your Research

It is a good idea to visit three or more early learning programs for at least 30 minutes each. If possible, bring your child with you on the visits and feel free to ask questions. Use the Quality Checklist for guidance on what to look for during your visit. If possible, visit the providers for a second time. Ask for references and talk to parents of children attending the program.



Make an Informed Decision

Like any parent, you want a program that will keep your child healthy, safe and happy. Before making a final decision, check the state’s child care licensing website, <https://cares.myflfamilies.com/PublicSearch>, for inspection information about any licensed program you are considering.

Using Child Care Resource and Referral Services

All families can receive help in researching and selecting programs that best meet their needs. Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) is a free service provided by your local early learning coalition. Trained staff can answer your questions about choosing the best early learning program for your family, provide you a child care listing customized to your preferences and offer referrals and information about other services available in your community. Help is available by phone, in person and via email. To locate your early learning coalition, contact the state CCR&R network office Toll-free Family Line at 1-866-357-3239 (TTY: 711), or find contact information online at www.FloridaEarlyLearning.com/coalitions.

Inclusive Early Learning Programs

Inclusive early learning programs are designed to provide an educational setting in which all children, regardless of ability, can participate in a broad range of activities that support their growth and development. A quality inclusive early learning program will exhibit all of the requirements listed for quality child care programs. Parents of children with disabilities, developmental delays or special health care needs should look for a program that meets the individual needs of their child and their family. Contact your local early learning coalition to find services in your community. To locate your early learning coalition, contact the state CCR&R network office Toll-free Family Line at 1-866-357-3239 (TTY: 711), or find contact information online at www.FloridaEarlyLearning.com/coalitions.

"PERFECT" MATCH: YOUR CHILDREN AND THEIR CHILD CARE SETTING

Children have different ways of behaving with others. How does your child like to spend time and how does he or she act? Match your child's temperament with the style of an early learning program. Remember, there is no right or wrong temperament or personality for your child to have. Understanding your child's activity level and personality characteristics will help you find the best early learning program for your child and family.



How does your child react to the world?

Big Reactor	Low Reactor
Expresses feelings and does not hold back	Plays quietly, fusses very little and sleeps a lot
<i>Look for a caregiver who helps your child express emotions in a more controlled way.</i>	<i>Look for a teacher who introduces new activities gently.</i>

How active is your child?

High Activity	Low Activity
Always on the go, explores with body movements	Sits quietly, explores through senses
<i>Look for a program that offers one-on-one attention, ways to explore safely and lots of physical play.</i>	<i>Look for a caregiver who engages your child in sensory-rich activities (sight, touch, smell, taste and sound).</i>

How social is your child?

Very Social	Less Social
Enjoys meeting new people and is happiest when interacting with others	Generally shy and reserved around strangers and needs extra time to feel comfortable with new people
<i>Look for a program with opportunities for your child to play in groups.</i>	<i>Look for a program that allows your child to become comfortable at his/her pace.</i>

How does your child deal with change?

High Tolerance	Low Tolerance
Not disturbed by changes, highly adaptable and copes very well with frustration	Very sensitive to change, gets upset with daily routines are disrupted and easily frustrated and bothered by change
<i>Look for a program with mixed-age groups that offer frequent challenges and high stimulation.</i>	<i>Look for a program with same-age groups and consistent routines that support your child's independence.</i>

What is your child's personal style?

Adaptable/Outgoing	Cautious/Slow to warm up	Feisty/Energetic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Flexible - Approaches new people/situations with ease - Good with transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Thoughtful - Cautious in new surroundings/with new people - Has difficulty with transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Passionate, feels things intensely - Has difficulty controlling strong feelings - Impatient and demanding
<i>Look for a large group setting that provides social opportunities and new experiences.</i>	<i>Look for a small group setting that is less overwhelming.</i>	<i>Look for a program where each child has a primary caregiver.</i>

Remember to always consider your child's unique needs such as sleeping habits or routines, cultural identity and any special needs or disabilities.

*Adapted from *Matching Your Infant's or Toddler's Style to the Right Child Care Setting*, Child Care Aware of America.



QUALITY CHILD CARE

Research identifies essential indicators to quality in child care programs. When implemented in a child care program, these quality indicators support children's healthy development and learning.



Quality Indicator	In quality programs	What to look for
Health & Safety	Caregivers ensure the health and safety of children in their care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Detailed procedures to maintain hygiene and prevent illness, including proper diapering, toileting and hand washing. - Infants are always placed on their backs for safe sleep.
Well-Trained Staff	Staff receive training and support to meet the needs of all children.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers have education in early childhood and complete ongoing training. - Staff are offered opportunities for professional development.
Environments for Learning	Environments are nurturing with daily routines that make children feel safe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Toys, books, furniture and outdoor equipment are clean and in good condition. - Materials are accessible to children.
Small Groups with Optimal Ratios	Secure relationships between teachers and children are promoted by having small groups and low child-to-teacher ratios.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Small group sizes and ratios are maintained so children receive more individualized time and attention. - Teachers stay attentive and engaged with their small group.

Quality Indicator	In quality programs	What to look for
Primary Caregiving & Continuity of Care	Teachers are given roles as primary caregivers for the children in their class, helping build meaningful relationships with the child and family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The same teacher continues to be the child's primary teacher as that child grows. - Each child is assigned a primary teacher.
Active & Responsive Caregiving	Teachers are responsive to children's needs, helping children regulate their emotions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Predictable routines and schedules are used daily. - All children are valued, accepted and respected.
Curriculum & Individualization	Teachers use curriculum that encourages learning through relationships and play.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Infants and toddlers are taught skills through routines and play. - Teachers individualize instruction to meet the needs of all children. - Activities and goals meet the developmental needs of each child.
Language & Literacy	Children are offered opportunities to learn and develop language skills in many different ways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Books and toys are used to promote conversations with children. - Songs, nursery rhymes and finger plays are used to encourage language. - Teachers read to children often during the day.
Family Engagement & Cultural Continuity	Families and their cultures are valued and families are treated as partners in their child's development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers communicate with families frequently. - The values, beliefs and cultures of the families are included in the classrooms as much as possible. - Families are welcome in their children's classes. - Families give input on some program decisions.
Comprehensive Support Services	Families are strengthened through connections to community supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers share developmental milestones with families and keep them informed of their children's progress. - Families are connected with community resources and services as needed.

TYPES OF EARLY LEARNING PROVIDERS

Child Care Centers

Early learning centers may be licensed or license-exempt and are usually located in spaces adapted for early learning purposes. These include stand-alone centers and those located in businesses, homes, apartment complexes, public schools, universities, hospitals and faith-based organizations. Prekindergarten programs (both school-based and non-school-based), Head Start programs, on-site employee early learning centers and faith-based centers are some of the types of early learning and school-aged providers that are available.



Licensed Child Care Centers

Licensed centers must submit a complete licensure application and pass an initial inspection by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or the local licensing agency. Once the license is issued, these programs are inspected a minimum of three times per year to ensure health and safety standards continue to be met. To meet the standards these centers must

- Meet physical facility requirements.
- Follow health, safety and nutrition standards.
- Maintain enrollment and attendance records.
- Allow parents/guardians access to their children at all times.
- Comply with annual inspection schedules.
- Meet staff and director training requirements.
- Conduct background screenings of all child care personnel.
- Document current immunization records and physical examinations for all children in care.
- Comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and make reasonable accommodations for children with special needs.

Religious-Exempt Centers

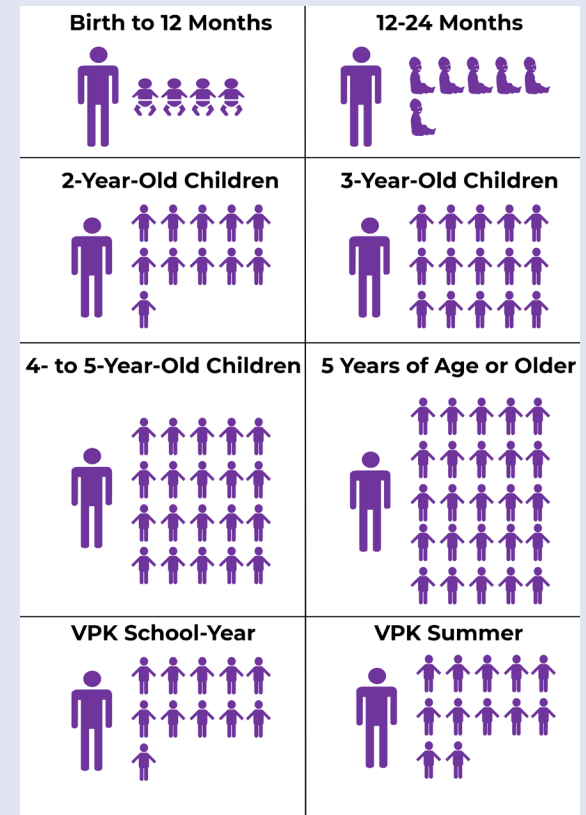
Some faith-based child care centers are eligible for exemption from child care licensing. These centers must be an integral part of a church or faith-based school and must

- Be accredited by or a member of a state-recognized accrediting body.
- Comply with state and federal background screening requirements.
- Meet local governing requirements for city or county health and safety regulations.
- Maintain enrollment and attendance records.
- Maintain current CPR and First Aid certifications.
- Comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and make reasonable accommodations for children with special needs.

Adult-to-Child Ratios for Licensed and Religious-Exempt Centers

Ratios represent the number of children that one adult may supervise for each age group. Ratios are regulated by DCF. Appropriate staff to child ratios are listed below.

- Birth to 12 months (1:4)
- 12-24 months (1:6)
- 2-year-old children (1:11)
- 3-year-old children (1:15)
- 4- to 5-year-old children (1:20)
 - 4- to 5-year-olds in VPK education programs
 - School-year program (1:11)
 - Summer program (1:12)
- 5 years of age or older (1:25)



Family Child Care Homes

Family child care takes place in a person's home for children from unrelated families. Group size may vary according to preferences of the family child care provider; however, the provider must maintain the required ratios at all times. Ages of children may often be mixed, although some providers serve only a specific age group (such as infants, toddlers or preschoolers). Different requirements apply to different programs, with some family child care homes being licensed and some registered.



Registered Family Child Care Homes

These providers are required to meet minimal state requirements, such as:

- Register annually with DCF.
- Complete and provide to parents/guardians an annual health and safety home inspection checklist.
- Provide proof of substitute care.
- Complete background screening for all adults and juveniles in the household.
- Complete introductory training, early literacy training and additional hours of annual professional development.
- Maintain children's immunization records.

Licensed Family Child Care Homes

Licensed family child care home providers must meet all requirements listed above for registered family child care homes and the following additional licensing requirements regulated by DCF or the local licensing agency:

- Comply with health, safety and nutrition guidelines.
- Maintain enrollment and attendance records.
- Comply with licensing standards of local and state governments.
- Maintain current pediatric CPR and First Aid certifications.
- Pass an inspection prior to receiving a child care operating license.
- Comply with licensing inspections annually.
- Comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act and make reasonable accommodations for children with special needs.

Large Family Child Care Homes

A large family child care home is an occupied residence in which child care is regularly provided for children from at least two unrelated families, which receives a payment, fee or grant for any of the children receiving care, whether or not operated for profit, and which has at least one full-time employee on the premises during the hours of operation in addition to the operator of the home.

Large family child care home providers must meet all requirements for licensed family child care homes and additional requirements regulated by DCF. Prior to applying for a license, the operator must have operated as a licensed family child care home for two consecutive years.

Adult-to-Child Ratios for Family Child Care Homes

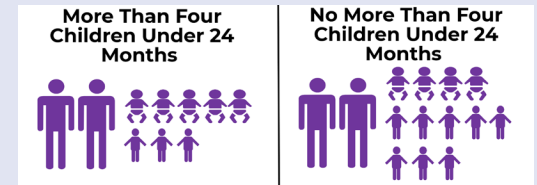
Family child care homes are regulated by DCF. A family child care provider may care for one of the following groups of children, including the provider's own children younger than 13 years of age:

- (1:4) Birth to 12 months of age.
- (1:6) No more than three are under 12 months.
- (1:10) As long as at least five children are school-age and no more than two are under 12 months of age.



Large Family Child Care Home (ratio based on two caregivers - the operator and one employee)

- (2:8) If more than four children under 24 months old.
- (2:12) If no more than four children are under 24 months old.



Gold Seal and Accreditation

The Gold Seal Quality Care Designation Program recognizes child care centers and family child care homes (either licensed or license-exempt) that are accredited by nationally recognized agencies and whose standards reflect quality in the level of care and supervision provided to children. To access the list of current DCF-approved agencies participating in the Gold Seal Quality Care Program, visit <http://myflfamilies.com/service-programs/child-care/goldseal>.

Note: Some counties may have more restrictive requirements than those mandated by the state.

SCHOOL-AGE CARE

Licensed or License-Exempt

A school-age program is a licensed or license-exempt program that serves only school-age children. A school-age child is one who is at least 5 years old by Sept. 1, and who is attending kindergarten or a higher grade level. The setting for a school-age program may be a public or private school, private center, family child care home, faith-based center or community/recreation program. School-age programs may be open before and/or after school as well as full days during teacher planning days, spring, winter and summer breaks.



Licensed Programs

Licensed programs must pass inspections to ensure that specific requirements are met such as:

- Physical physical facility requirements.
- Health, safety and nutrition standards.
- Maintenance of enrollment and attendance records.
- Parental access to their children in care at all times.
- Compliance with annual inspections.
- Completion of 40 hours introductory training, plus a minimum of 10 hours in-service annually thereafter.
- Submission of screening and background checks of all employees/caregivers.
- Ratio of one adult for 25 children.
- Supervisor/director holds a director's credential (multi-site supervision at school-age child care programs is permitted).

License-Exempt Programs

The following programs are exempt from school-age care licensure, but must meet minimum background screening requirements as outlined in Florida law. These programs can be license-exempt if one of the following exemptions applies:

- Programs on public/non-public school sites.
- Instructions/tutorial programs.
- Open Access programs.
- National membership afterschool programs.
- Programs exclusively for children grades six and above.

Note: Some counties may have more restrictive requirements than those mandated by the state.

UNREGULATED CARE

Unregulated child care does not require licensure or compliance inspections by the state.

Informal Care

Informal care takes place in a person's home where one adult cares for children from only one family. The person is often a relative, neighbor and/or friend. This type of care has no state guidelines or inspections. Informal providers may qualify to participate in the School Readiness Program (see Financial Resources section) after completing a six-hour health and safety course and by meeting local early learning coalition requirements.



Au Pair/Nanny Care

Au pairs provide families with intercultural, individualized, live-in child care. Most au pairs are members of one of 14 federally designated U.S. Au Pair Sponsor Agencies, which are regulated by the U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs Exchange Visitor Program. Nannies may also be hired by families locally to care for the children of one family and may live in or out of the family's home.

Summer Camps and Recreational Programs

Summer camps and summer day camps are recreational, educational and enrichment programs operated exclusively during summer vacation. These programs care for children who turn five years of age on or before Sept. 1 of the current year. They also care for children who are in kindergarten and above. Adult/child ratios of summer camps vary. This type of care requires no state inspections. All summer camp and summer day camp personnel must pass a Level 2 background screening.

Membership Programs

Not-for-profit programs are associated with or certified by national organizations; therefore, personnel are not subject to the Department of Children and Families' screenings. An example of these organizations is the Boys and Girls Club, which frequently offers an after-school program.

VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN (VPK) EDUCATION PROGRAM



VPK builds a strong educational foundation for 4-year-old children so they are prepared to enter kindergarten with the skills that lead to success in kindergarten and beyond. The early learning programs that offer VPK must ensure staff and programs meet high-quality expectations. The programs' curricula must be effective and class size must allow the teachers to build close relationships with each child.

VPK Highlights

- High quality educational program with a focus on early literacy skills.
- Free for all children who live in Florida and are 4 years old on or before Sept. 1 of the program year.
 - If the child's birthday falls from Feb. 2 through Sept. 1, parents may wait to enroll their child the following year when they are 5 years old.
- Information and materials about VPK standards designed specifically for parents can be found at fibt5.floridaearlylearning.com.

VPK Program Options

Parents may select one program for their child.

<u>VPK School-Year Program</u>	<u>VPK Summer Program</u>	<u>VPK Specialized Instructional Services (SIS)</u>
540 instructional hours	300 instructional hours	Hours vary based on services provided

Transportation

Parents are responsible for their child's transportation to and from the VPK program.

VPK Curriculum

- Must be developmentally appropriate and focused on early literacy skills.
- Must prepare the child to be ready for kindergarten based on standards adopted by the State Board of Education.

VPK Specialized Instructional Services (SIS)

A child who is eligible for VPK and has a disability, as evidenced by a current individual educational plan (IEP) issued by the local school district, is also eligible for specialized instructional services instead of attending a traditional VPK program. The Department of Education approves VPK-SIS providers whose services meet statutory standards, maintains a list of approved providers and notifies early learning coalitions of the approved providers. Parents with questions about accessing VPK-SIS for their child should contact their local early learning coalition. To locate your early learning coalition, contact the state CCR&R network office Toll-free Family Line at 1-866-357-3239 (TTY: 711), or find contact information online at www.FloridaEarlyLearning.com/coalitions.

VPK Providers and Instructors

All VPK providers and instructors must meet high standards required by Florida law.

- Parents can choose the approved provider that meets their own family's needs.
- Options for parents include public and private schools, private centers, charter schools and licensed family child care homes.
- All VPK instructors must have at the minimum a Child Development Associate Credential (CDA) for the school-year program or a bachelor's degree for the summer program.
- Class ratio is one teacher to 11 children, and class size cannot exceed 20 children with two instructors for a school year program. The summer program has one instructor with a maximum of 12 students.





Readiness Rates

The Office of Early Learning assigns a kindergarten readiness rate annually for VPK providers that offer either the school year or summer program. The readiness rate measures how well a VPK provider prepares children to be ready for kindergarten based on the performance standards adopted by the State Board of Education. A VPK provider's readiness rate serves as an additional piece of information families may use to determine if a VPK program is best suited to the needs of their family. Readiness rates can be found at <https://vpk.fldoe.org>.

How to Apply

VPK applications must be submitted online through the Office of Early Learning's Family Portal website (<https://familyservices.floridaearlylearning.com>). You can use a computer, cell phone or other smart device, or you can contact your early learning coalition to apply in person.

To complete the VPK application, you must upload proof of Florida residency and documents that verify your child's age. Once submitted, the application will be reviewed by the local early learning coalition. You will receive a certificate of eligibility when your application is approved. Take the certificate of eligibility to the VPK program of your choice.

Early Learning Coalitions

Your local early learning coalition can provide assistance with the application and listings of VPK programs in your area. To locate your early learning coalition, contact the state CCR&R network office Toll-free Family Line at 1-866-357-3239 (TTY: 711), or find contact information online at www.FloridaEarlyLearning.com/coalitions.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES



The School Readiness Program offers financial assistance to eligible families to help pay for child care costs and to support parents in becoming financially self-sufficient. The program prepares children to be ready for school and provides parents with information on child development and other topics of interest. Services vary based on individual needs and range from early education and care to after-school and school-age care in some instances.

Program Highlights

- Provides income-eligible families the resources to find and pay for quality child care for their children.
- Promotes parental choice in choosing a child care program and allows working parents to make their own decisions that best suit their family's needs.
- Provides education to parents to help them make informed choices about child care and early learning.
- Enhances the quality and increases the availability of child care for all families.
- Prepares children for kindergarten and continued educational success.

How to Apply

Parents can apply for the School Readiness Program by submitting an application online using the Office of Early Learning's Family Portal (<https://familyservices.floridaearlylearning.com>). You can use a computer, cell phone or other smart device, or you can contact your early learning coalition to apply in person. All applications are processed by the local early learning coalition for each county.



Next Steps

Once a parent applies for the School Readiness Program they can follow up on the status of their application by contacting their local early learning coalition or logging into the Family Portal.

Because of limited funding, families may be placed on a waiting list. If a child is placed on the waiting list, parents can receive information about local community resources that may assist their family. **Parents with a child on the waiting list will need to update their information in the Family Portal every six months or they will lose their child's spot on the waiting list.**

If there is no waiting list and the family qualifies for services, they will receive information regarding additional documents that must be provided for the enrollment process. Families may contact their local early learning coalition at any time for assistance with the Family Portal.

Some families may receive services right away if they are in family crisis and have a referral for services from the Department of Children and Families.

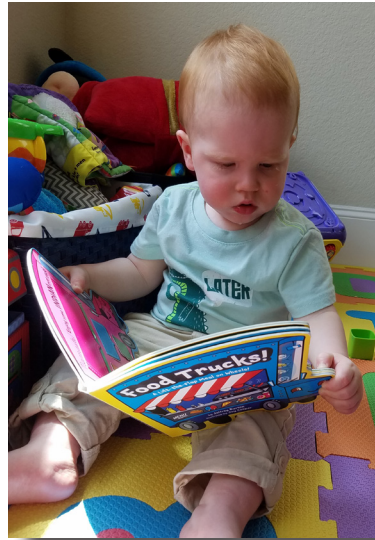
Developmental Screenings

Children that participate in the School Readiness Program will receive a developmental screening to make sure they are on the right developmental path. If any concerns are found, the child will receive referrals to specific health and/or education specialists.

These services also work along with other programs for young children such as Head Start, Early Head Start, the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program and local public school districts.

Around-the-Clock Care

Some families need child care in the evenings, overnight or on the weekends because of work schedules. School readiness services include extended-day, extended-year and school-age care for children to assist parents in becoming financially self-sufficient.



HEAD START



Head Start is the name for a group of programs that promote school readiness for children from low-income families. Head Start programs provide a learning environment that supports children's growth and provides comprehensive services to children and their families, which include

health, dental, nutrition, social and other services determined to be necessary based on the needs and desires of the family. Head Start services are designed to be responsive to each child and family's ethnic, cultural and linguistic heritage.

Head Start emphasizes the role of parents as their child's first and most important teacher. Programs build relationships with families that support

- Family well-being and positive parent-child relationships.
- Families as learners and lifelong educators.
- Family engagement in transitions.
- Family connections to peers and community.
- Families as advocates and leaders.

Head Start Services in Florida

Head Start serves preschool age children from age 3 to school-age and is offered in all 67 counties in Florida. Early Head Start serves infants, toddlers and pregnant women and provides services in 54 counties. Florida is also host to two Migrant and Seasonal Head Start programs: East Coast Migrant Head Start and Redlands Christian Migrant Association. These grantees serve the unique needs of Florida's migrant families who have children ages 6 weeks to school-age.

Head Start programs offer a variety of service models, depending on the needs of the local community. Programs may be based in centers or schools that children attend for part-day or full-day services; family child care homes; and/or children's own homes, where a staff person visits once a week to provide services to the child and family. Children and families who receive home-based services gather periodically with other enrolled families for a group learning experience facilitated by Head Start staff.

Head Start programs provide services to children with disabilities or special health care needs and collaborate with local school districts, early learning coalitions, health professionals and other partners to assist the family in coordinating services. Head Start classrooms offer low teacher-to-child ratios, a research-based curriculum, teachers with bachelor degrees or CDAs, year-round services (in most communities), and most participate in Florida's VPK Program.

For more information, visit www.FloridaHeadStart.org.

EARLY INTERVENTION

When a developmental delay is not recognized early, children must wait to get the help they need. This can make it hard for them to learn when they start school. In the United States, 15% of children have a developmental or behavioral disability such as autism, a learning disability or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

In addition, many children have delays in language or other areas. Less than half of children with problems are identified before starting school. From 9-24 months, key social communication milestones are developing and it is important to examine your child's social communication during this time. Make sure that you have your child screened to eliminate the possibility of any communication disorders.

If you are concerned about the development of your infant or toddler or suspect that your child has a disability or needs early intervention services, contact your local early learning coalition to speak with an inclusion specialist.

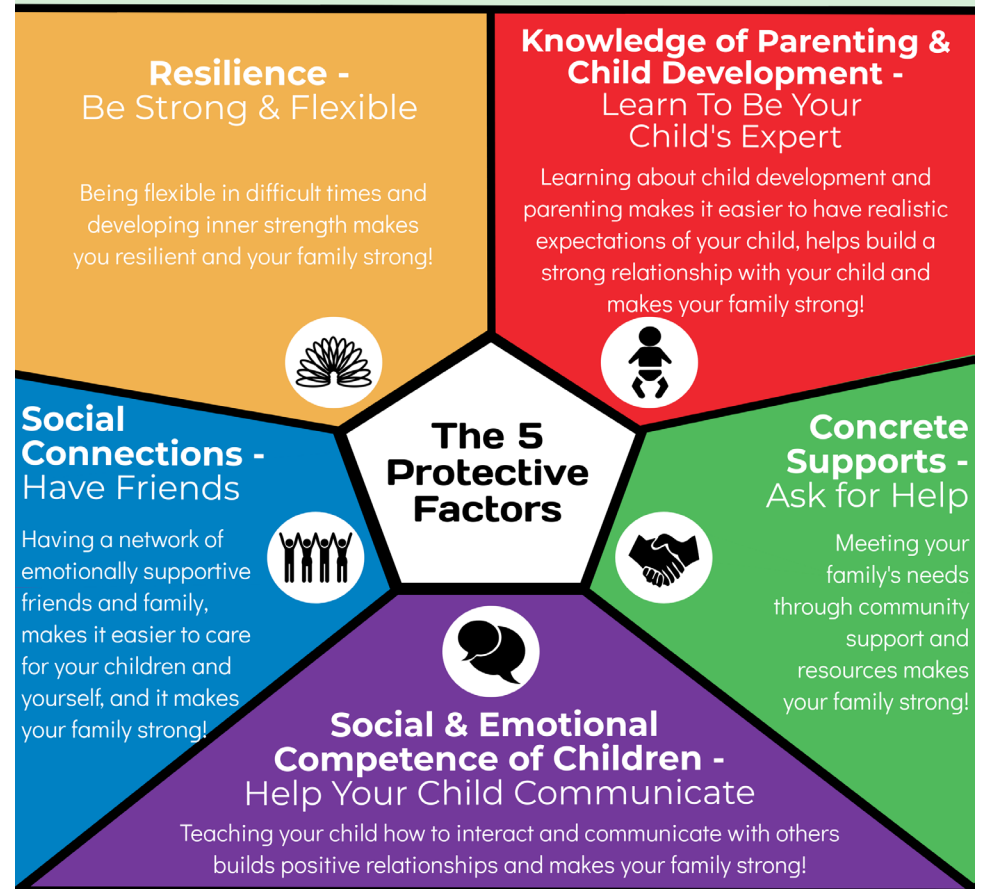


STRENGTHENING FAMILIES: THE PROTECTIVE FACTORS

The protective factors are characteristics or strengths of individuals or families that enable families to support the health and well-being of their children. This information is important in making sure children and youth are successful at home, in school, at work and in the community.

Strong Families

We all face challenges in life from time to time. When your family faces hard times, you can keep your family strong by establishing the **5 Protective Factors**.



Strengthening Families™ is a research-informed approach developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy. The framework is used to increase family strengths, enhance child development and reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect.

CENTER FOR THE STUDY OF SOCIAL POLICY'S

strengthening families
A PROTECTIVE FACTORS FRAMEWORK

WEBSITES THAT PROMOTE CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Florida Early Learning and Developmental Standards for Birth to Kindergarten:

<http://flbt5.floridaearlylearning.com>



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Parent Information:

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones>

<https://www.cdc.gov/parents/essentials/index.html>



Center for Early Literacy Learning Parent Information:

<http://www.earlyliteracylearning.org/parentresource1.php>



Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Learning:

<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/family.html>



Center on the Social and Emotional
Foundations for Early Learning

National Association for the Education of Young Children:

<https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/for-families>



National Association for the
Education of Young Children

PBS Parents: <http://www.pbs.org/parents/>



Zero to Three: <https://www.zerotothree.org/parenting>



FREE APPS FOR FAMILIES

CDC's FREE Milestone Tracker App

- Track Milestones
- Share a Summary
- Get Tips & Activities

Learn more at cdc.gov/MilestoneTracker

You have what it takes to be a brain builder!

Download the Vroom app to add learning to mealtime, bathtime, bedtime, and anytime with Vroom tips.

See for yourself how Vroom tips are fast and fun!
vroom.org

Download on the App Store | GET IT ON Google Play

También disponible en español

vroom

FAMILY RESOURCES

OFFICE OF EARLY LEARNING

Provides state-level support and direction for parents, teachers and early learning professionals. OEL administers three statewide programs including the state child care assistance program, School Readiness, the free Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program for 4-year-olds and the Child Care Resource and Referral program for all Florida families.

1-866-357-3239 (Toll-free), (TTY:711)

www.floridaearlylearning.com



2-1-1

A 24-hour hotline where parents connect with national, state and local information and referral services. 2-1-1 offers parents information to assist families with food, housing, employment, health care and counseling services.

Dial 211

www.211.org



ACCESS FLORIDA

Temporary cash assistance and food stamp information is available through DCF's Access Florida Hotline.

1-866-762-2237 (Toll-free)

www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/access



AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS BRIGHT FUTURES

A national health promotion and prevention initiative, led by the American Academy of Pediatrics and supported by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration that provides guidance for all preventive care screenings and well-child visits.

<https://brightfutures.aap.org/Pages/default.aspx>



CHILD CARE AWARE® of AMERICA

National network of more than 900 child care resource and referral agencies committed to helping parents find the best information on locating quality programs and resources in their local community; maintains links to resource and referral agencies in every state.

1-800-424-2246 (Toll-free)

<http://childcareaware.org/families/>



CHILD HELP USA® NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE

This hotline is staffed 24 hours daily with professional crisis counselors with access to thousands of resources.

1-800-4-A-Child or 1-800-422-4453 (Toll-free)

www.childhelp.org

www.childhelp.org/states/florida



DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN & FAMILIES (DCF) LICENSING WEBSITE

Responsible for the administration of child care program licensing and training throughout Florida and administers programs addressing issues such as adult and child protective services, homelessness, food stamps, refugee services and adoption and foster care.

www.myflorida.com/childcare

Find Child Care Providers

<https://cares.myflfamilies.com/PublicSearch>



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH/CHILDREN'S MEDICAL SERVICES/EARLY STEPS

Provides information and referrals on disabilities and special health care needs for families, service coordinators and other professionals who work with children with special needs.

1-800-218-0001 (Toll-free)

[http://www.floridahealth.gov/AlternateSites/](http://www.floridahealth.gov/AlternateSites/CMS-Kids/early_steps_directory/index.html)

[CMS-Kids/early_steps_directory/index.html](http://www.floridahealth.gov/AlternateSites/CMS-Kids/early_steps_directory/index.html)



FLORIDA CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT

Child support services that include locating missing parents, establishing legal paternity, and establishing, enforcing and modifying support orders.

1-800-622-KIDS or 1-800-622-5437 (Toll-free)

www.myflorida.com/dor/childsupport/



FLORIDA KIDCARE

Health insurance program for uninsured children younger than age 19. The Florida Kidcare program assesses eligibility based on age and family income.

1-888-540-5437 (Toll-free), (TTY: 1-877-316-8748)

<http://floridakidcare.org/>



FLORIDA HEALTHY START

Ensures that all Florida families have access to a continuum of affordable and quality health and related services.

727-507-6330

www.healthystartflorida.com



HEAD START

Head Start is a national school readiness program that provides comprehensive education, health, nutrition and parent involvement services to children from low-income families. For Head Start programs in your area, visit the listed website.

www.floridaheadstart.org



THE OUNCE OF PREVENTION FUND

Identifies and supports prevention programs to improve outcomes for children, preserve and strengthen families and promote healthy behavior and functioning in society.

<https://www.ounce.org/>



PARENTS WITHOUT PARTNERS

Provides help to single parents through discussions, professional speakers, study groups, publications and social activities for families.

1-800-637-7974 (Toll-free)

<http://www.parentswithoutpartners.org>



What is CCR&R?

CCR&R is a free service that helps families

- Identify and select quality early learning programs.
- Connect to local community agencies and resources.
- Engage in their children's education and learning.
- Locate financial resource options.



Family Focused

When a family contacts CCR&R, they can receive



Child Care Listings

Based on information from the family, CCR&R can provide a customized list of child care options.



Financial Assistance Options

CCR&R can provide information and help with applying for child care assistance and exploring other financial assistance options.



Consumer Education

CCR&R can provide information on a range of topics including how to locate quality early learning programs and the importance of family engagement.



Community Resources

CCR&R can connect families with local resources that may be able to assist with other needs, such as housing, food or utility assistance.



CCR&R can also provide information about and help families apply for

Florida
VPK

Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) - a free educational program available for all of Florida's 4-year-olds that prepares children for kindergarten.

Florida
School Readiness

School Readiness - a program that helps income eligible families in Florida pay for child care and helps children to be ready for school.



CCR&R call center: 1-866-357-3239
www.floridaearlylearning.com

Florida Department of Education
Office of Early Learning
Child Care Resource and Referral Network
Toll-free Family Line: 1-866-357-3239
<http://www.floridaearlylearning.com>



OFFICE OF
Early Learning
LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE.

QUALITY CHECKLIST



*For Child Care Centers
and Preschools*



OFFICE OF
Early Learning
LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE

OBSERVATION TIPS

Look and Listen

You learn a great deal by watching and listening to what is going on in a classroom. Children should seem happy and engaged in age-appropriate activities. Teachers should seem kind, nurturing and responsive to all children in their care. Listen to the words teachers use when talking to the children. Children need to hear a wide variety of words to promote their language development.

Ask Questions

If you have any questions or concerns, **write them down as they occur to you.** Ask for a time to discuss them with the director or teacher. The center's director and teachers should be willing to answer your questions and address any concerns you may have.

Pay Attention to Your Instincts

Take note of any uneasy feelings you may have during your visit. **You know your child best.** If possible, take your child with you and see how they react. Children respond in their own unique ways to new situations. Be careful not to rule out other factors that could influence your child's reaction such as being hungry or tired. **Trust your instincts and your ability to make wise decisions for your child.** You want to feel good about your child spending many hours each day in a child care center or preschool.

Consider Costs

Take into consideration any additional fees. Carefully weigh the "pros" and "cons" of each center, director and teacher you visit. Decide which one meets the greatest number of your priorities at a rate you can afford. Keep in mind that the highest cost does not always guarantee the best quality. Likewise, the least expensive rates do not always suggest poor quality.

Make an Informed Decision

Your first concern is your child's safety, health and welfare. Every center will have positive features, but **only you can decide what is most important.** Now that you have done your homework and some careful thinking, you are ready to make your choice. Remember, selecting and placing your child in an early learning program is just the beginning. **Talk to your child's teacher often and visit occasionally** to ensure your child is safe and happy and your decision was the right one.

Select centers you plan to visit and write their information here.

Center 1	
Center 2	
Center 3	

Center Information			
Questions To Ask/Things to Consider	Center 1	Center 2	Center 3
How far is it from home/work?			
Do the hours of operation and holiday schedule accommodate your work schedule?			
What is the rate or cost of care? <i>For infants, toddlers, preschool, school-age</i>			
Are there discounts or priority for siblings?			
Are there any additional fees and how often are they due? <i>Weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc.</i> <i>supplies/materials</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>meals/snacks</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>registration/application</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>early drop-off/late pick-up</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>field trips or special activities</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>late payment</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>other</i> <input type="checkbox"/>			
What are the drop-off and pick-up times? <i>You can also ask about their check in/check out procedures.</i>			
Does the center charge when a child is out sick or on vacation?			
Does the center offer safe and reliable transportation? <i>Drivers should be licensed and the vehicles must be insured. Children should be properly restrained in appropriate car safety seats.</i>			
Are there staff with specialized training for children with a variety of special needs?			
Does the center participate in the subsidized child care program? <i>School Readiness Program</i>			
Does the center participate in the state's VPK program? <i>For 4- and 5-year-olds</i>			
Does the center offer Head Start or Early Head Start? <i>For children under 5 years old</i>			

Notes:

Health and Safety			
Questions To Ask/Things to Consider	Center 1	Center 2	Center 3
Is the center licensed or accredited?			
Can they provide their state inspection history?			
Does the center have complete background checks on all staff? <i>Required</i>			
What is the discipline policy? <i>Required</i>			
Is the center safe, clean and welcoming?			
Are strict emergency and security plans in place? <i>Required</i>			
How are children accounted for throughout the day? <i>Required</i>			
Is the front entry always locked and staffed for security?			
Is there a safe, fenced outdoor area? <i>Required</i>			
What is the center's policy for administering medications?			
Are healthy and nutritious snacks/meals provided? <i>Centers should have planned weekly menus available.</i>			
How often does diapering/toileting occur?			
Is handwashing done frequently?			
Do the children have an opportunity to play outside each day? <i>Required</i>			
Is there a variety of outside equipment/toys available and appropriate for various ages?			
Is there shade available outside where the children play? <i>Required</i>			
Do children 2 years and younger play separately from the older children?			
Are fire extinguishers on site? <i>Required</i>			

Did you know?

The Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) and local licensing agencies monitor and inspect licensed child care programs and licensed-exempt School Readiness programs to ensure their health and safety, background screening and training requirements are in compliance with state and federal laws.



**FLORIDA DEPARTMENT
OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**
MYFLFAMILIES.COM

You can find child care inspection reports and other valuable resources on their website at <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/child-care/parent-resources>.

Well-Trained Staff			
Questions To Ask/Things to Consider	Center 1	Center 2	Center 3
Are the staff well-trained? <i>May include a degree in early childhood, required teacher/director certifications, ongoing professional development and trainings, etc.</i>			
How long have the teachers and director been there? <i>Longer employed staff reflects well on teacher retention and is good for continuity of care.</i>			
How is teacher turnover handled? <i>Look for centers with a plan to support children during teacher transitions.</i>			
How are teacher absences handled? <i>Look for centers with qualified substitutes or floating staff who are able to fill in.</i>			
Are teachers or the director trained to administer developmental screenings and identify children who may need additional services? <i>If not, ask where developmental screenings take place.</i>			
Does the center participate in a local quality rating and improvement system or has there been a program assessment completed recently?			
Does the center have a Gold Seal designation?			

QRIS

A Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is designed to assess and improve the quality of early learning programs. Florida does not have a statewide QRIS program; however, some counties have implemented a local QRIS. Check with your local early learning coalition to see if they have a QRIS and what information they can give you about your potential center.

Program Assessment

Child care centers in Florida participating in the School Readiness Program may receive an assessment using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) tool. CLASS is an observation-based program assessment that measures the quality of interactions between teachers and children. CLASS is recognized internationally for capturing elements within a classroom that improve child outcomes including increased math achievement, stronger vocabulary and reading outcomes and better classroom behavior. **If a center participates in the School Readiness Program, ask about their CLASS score.**



Environments for Learning			
Questions To Ask/Things to Consider	Center 1	Center 2	Center 3
Is there a primary teacher for each age group?			
What are the ratios? <i>Look for small groups and ratios (ex. 1 adult for 4 infants).</i>			
Are teachers responsive to children's needs?			
Are toys, books and furniture clean and in good shape? <i>There should be enough for all children in the classroom.</i>			
Is the classroom arranged in a way that toys and materials are accessible to children?			
Are the children and teachers happy?			
Are the children engaged in activities? <i>Activities should be age-appropriate.</i>			
Does the center appear to be culturally responsive? <i>Are translated materials or other accommodations made available for families and children as needed?</i>			
Do teachers read daily to children and are books provided for children to use independently?			
Are songs, finger plays and interactive nursery rhymes part of daily routines?			
Is there space for active and quiet play?			
How does the center use technology to support learning? How often is technology used?			

What are Positive Teacher-Child Relationships?

In early childhood settings, each moment that teachers and children interact with one another is an opportunity to develop positive relationships.

To build positive relationships, teachers should

- Engage in one-to-one interactions with children.
- Get on the child's level for face-to-face interactions.
- Use a pleasant, calm voice and simple language.
- Provide warm, responsive physical contact.
- Follow the child's lead and interest during play.
- Help children understand classroom expectations.
- Redirect children when they engage in challenging behavior.
- Listen to children and encourage them to listen to others.
- Acknowledge children for their accomplishments and effort.

Family Engagement			
Questions To Ask/Things to Consider	Center 1	Center 2	Center 3
Can parents stop by at any time?			
Are parents encouraged to volunteer or participate in activities?			
Is there a daily method of communication between the teachers and parents?			
Is there a current weekly schedule posted in a visible location?			
Is your initial reaction upon entering the child care center a positive one?			

Family engagement is important because it

- Supports children’s kindergarten readiness skills.
- Increases children’s motivation and reduces challenging behavior.
- Improves children’s social and emotional development such as impulse control, attention span, memory and planning skills.
- Supports the healthy development of all children.

How can families get involved?

- Communicate with the director or teacher on a regular basis.
- Create a positive learning environment at home.
- Read to your child daily.
- Participate in community events for families.
- Volunteer at the center or in a classroom if you have time in your schedule.
- Participate in family meetings, parent-teacher conferences and parenting classes.
- Join the center’s advisory board or groups that help make decisions for the center.

You have what it takes to be a brain builder!

Download the Vroom app to add learning to mealtime, bathtime, bedtime, and anytime with Vroom tips.

See for yourself how Vroom tips are fast and fun!

vroom.org



También disponible en español

vroom

See how Vroom tips align with Florida's Early Learning and Developmental Standards at <http://flbt5.floridaearlylearning.com/families.html>

EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS IN FLORIDA

Child Care Resource and Referral

The **Child Care Resource and Referral Program** (CCR&R) is a statewide and local program that helps families

- Identify and select quality early learning programs.
- Connect to local community agencies and resources.
- Engage in their children's education and learning.
- Locate financial resource options.

School Readiness Program

Florida's **School Readiness Program** offers financial assistance for early education programs and child care to low-income families. The program encourages and supports families to become financially self-sufficient and to prepare their young children to be successful in school.

Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program

The **Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program** (VPK) is a free prekindergarten program for 4- and 5-year-olds who reside in Florida. Parents can enroll their child in the state's free VPK program if their child is 4 years old on or before Sept. 1 of the current school year. If the child's birthday is between Feb. 2 and Sept. 1, parents may choose to wait and enroll their child the following year at age 5.

Head Start and Early Head Start

The **Head Start and Early Head Start** (HS/EHS) program provides comprehensive education, health, nutrition and parent involvement services to low-income families and their children ages birth through age 5. HS/EHS provides child care and education for children in a classroom setting.

Contact Us

For more information, please contact your local early learning coalition. Find their contact information at www.floridaearlylearning.com/coalitions. The CCR&R State Network can also help connect you with your local early learning coalition's CCR&R program.

Toll free: 1-866-357-3239

Email: crrhelp@oel.myflorida.com

Florida Department of Education
Office of Early Learning

Child Care Resource and Referral State Network
250 Marriott Drive, Tallahassee, FL 32399



QUALITY CHECKLIST



For Family Child Care Homes



OFFICE OF
Early Learning
LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE

OBSERVATION TIPS

Look and Listen

You learn a great deal by watching and listening to what is going on in the learning environment. Children should seem happy and engaged in age-appropriate activities. Providers should seem kind, nurturing and responsive to all children in their care. Listen to the words providers use when talking to the children. Children need to hear a wide variety of words to promote their language development.

Ask Questions

If you have any questions or concerns, **write them down as they occur to you**. Ask for a time to discuss them with the family child care home provider. They should be willing to answer your questions and address any concerns you may have.

Pay attention to your instincts

Take note of any uneasy feelings you may have during your visit. **You know your child best**. If possible, take your child with you and see how they react. Children respond in their own unique ways to new situations. Be careful not to rule out other factors that could influence your child's reaction such as being hungry or tired. **Trust your instincts and your ability to make wise decisions for your child**. You want to feel good about your child spending many hours each day in a family child care home.

Consider Costs

Take into consideration any additional fees. Carefully weigh the "pros" and "cons" of each family child care home you visit. Decide which one meets the greatest number of your priorities at a rate you can afford. Keep in mind that the highest cost does not always guarantee the best quality. Likewise, the least expensive rates do not always suggest poor quality.

Make an Informed Decision

Your first concern is your child's safety, health and welfare. Every program will have positive features, but **only you can decide what is most important**. Now that you have done your homework and some careful thinking, you are ready to make your choice. Remember, selecting and placing your child in an early learning program is just the beginning. **Talk to the provider often and visit occasionally** to ensure your child is safe and happy and your decision was the right one.

Select providers you plan to visit and write their information here.

Provider 1	
Provider 2	
Provider 3	

Provider Information			
Questions To Ask/Things To Consider	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
How far is it from home/work?			
Do the hours of operation and holiday schedule accommodate your work schedule?			
What is the rate or cost of care? <i>For infants, toddlers, preschool, school-age</i>			
Are there discounts or priority for siblings?			
Are there any additional fees and how often are they due? <i>Weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc.</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>supplies/materials</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>meals/snacks</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>registration/application</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>early drop-off/late pick-up</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>field trips or special activities</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>late payment</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>other</i> <input type="checkbox"/> 	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What are the drop-off and pick-up times? <i>You can also ask about their check in/check out procedures.</i>			
Does the provider charge when a child is out sick or on vacation?			
Does the provider offer safe and reliable transportation? <i>Drivers should be licensed and insured. Children should be properly restrained in appropriate car safety seats.</i>			
Does the provider have specialized training for children with a variety of special needs?			
Does the provider participate in the subsidized child care program? <i>School Readiness Program</i>			
Does the provider participate in the state's VPK program? <i>For 4- and 5-year-olds</i>			
Does the provider offer Head Start or Early Head Start? <i>For children under 5 years old</i>			

Did you know?

The Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) and local licensing agencies monitor and inspect licensed family child care homes and large family child care homes to ensure their health and safety, background screening and training requirements are in compliance with state and federal laws.



You can find inspection reports and other valuable resources on their website at <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/child-care/parent-resources>.

Health and Safety			
Questions To Ask/Things To Consider	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
Is the provider licensed, registered or accredited?			
Can they provide their state inspection history?			
Has the provider completed background checks on all caregivers and family members? <i>Required</i>			
What is the discipline policy? <i>Required</i>			
Is the home safe, clean and welcoming?			
Are strict emergency and security plans in place? <i>Required</i>			
How are children accounted for throughout the day? <i>Required</i>			
Are fire extinguishers, working smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors (if the home has natural gas) on site? <i>Required</i>			
Is there a safe, fenced outdoor area? <i>Required</i>			
Is there shade available outside where the children play?			
Do the children have an opportunity to play outside each day?			
Is there a variety of outside equipment/toys available and appropriate for various ages?			
Are medicines and cleaners in a locked area out of reach of children? <i>Required</i>			
What is the policy for administering medications?			
Are healthy and nutritious snacks/meals provided? <i>Programs should have planned weekly menus available.</i>			
How often does diapering/toileting occur?			
Is handwashing done frequently?			
Does the home have pets and are they vaccinated? <i>If so, pets must have up-to-date immunizations and be disease free.</i>			
How are naptimes and sleeping arrangements managed?			
Are safe sleep practices followed?			

Well-Trained Staff			
Questions To Ask/Things To Consider	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
Is the provider(s) well-trained? <i>May include a degree in early childhood, required teacher/director certifications, ongoing professional development and trainings, etc.</i>			
What other family members will be present during child care hours?			
Does the provider have a substitute for illness/vacation and does the substitute meet state requirements?			
Is the provider trained to administer developmental screenings and identify children who may need additional services? <i>If not, ask where developmental screenings take place.</i>			
Does the provider participate in a local quality rating and improvement system or has there been a program assessment completed recently?			
Does the family child care home have a Gold Seal designation?			

QRIS

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Program Assessment

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Environments for Learning			
Questions To Ask/Things To Consider	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
What are the ratios? <i>Look for small groups and ratios (ex. 1 adult for 4 infants).</i>			
Does the provider seem patient and responsive to children's needs?			
Are toys, books and furniture clean and in good shape? <i>There should be enough for all children in the classroom.</i>			
Are toys and materials accessible to children?			
Are the children happy?			
Are the children engaged in activities? <i>Activities should be age-appropriate.</i>			
Does the program appear to be culturally responsive? <i>Are translated materials available or other accommodations made available for families and children as needed?</i>			
Does the provider read daily to children and are books provided for children to use independently?			
Are songs, finger plays and interactive nursery rhymes part of daily routines?			
Is there space for active and quiet play?			
How does the provider use technology to support learning? How often is technology used?			

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- Listen to children and encourage them to listen to others.
- Acknowledge children for their accomplishments and effort.

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, What Works Briefs

Family Engagement			
Questions To Ask/Things To Consider	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
Can parents stop by at any time?			
Are parents encouraged to volunteer or participate in activities?			
Is there a daily method of communication between the provider and parents?			
Is there a current weekly schedule posted in a visible location?			
Is your initial reaction upon entering the family child care home a positive one?			


Family engagement is important because it

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- Increases children's motivation and reduces challenging behavior.
- Improves children's social and emotional development such as impulse control, attention span, memory and planning skills.
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How can families get involved?

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- Read to your child daily.
- Participate in community events for families.
- Volunteer at the center or in a classroom if you have time in your schedule.
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vroom.org

Download on the App Store | GET IT ON Google Play

También disponible en español

vroom

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EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS IN FLORIDA

What is Family Child Care?

Family child care is defined as child care in small group sizes with children from at least two unrelated families. Care is provided in the provider's home located in a residential neighborhood. There are three types of family child care homes:

- Registered Family Child Care Homes.
- Licensed Family Child Care Homes.
- Licensed Large Family Child Care Homes.

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Head Start and Early Head Start

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Contact Us

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Toll free: 1-866-357-3239

Email: crrhelp@oel.myflorida.com



Florida Department of Education
Office of Early Learning

Child Care Resource and Referral State Network
250 Marriott Drive, Tallahassee, FL 32399



SELECTING A SUMMER CAMP FOR YOUR SCHOOL AGE CHILD

When selecting summer care for your school age child, there are many options to consider. Use this checklist as a guide to help you make a choice that is safe and fun for your child.

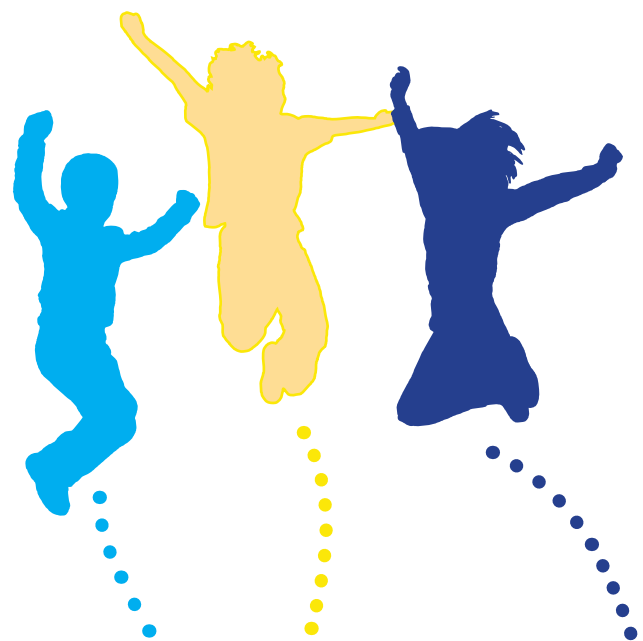
- APPLICATION, FEES, AND SCHEDULE**
Ask about the deadlines for submitting applications and fees, if there are any scholarships available and the refund policies if a child is unable to attend. What is the program's schedule such as opening and closing dates or drop-off and pick-up times? What activities are available and is there a daily schedule or lesson plan?

- HEALTH AND SAFETY**
Ask questions about background screenings of staff and volunteers as required by Florida law. Does the program provide nutritious meals and/or snacks? What are the camp's medication policies? If transportation for field trips is provided, have the vehicles been inspected? Staff should be certified in CPR and First Aid, as well as trained for any provided transportation. If children participate in water activities, there should be clear water safety policies and certified lifeguards.

- ENVIRONMENT**
Is the facility clean and adequate for the number of children in the program? Ask about the security of the facility, from strangers entering or children leaving. What are the sign-in and sign-out policies? Outdoor programs should include indoor or sheltered areas for resting or respite from the sun or bad weather. You can also ask if there is an electronics policy.

- CHILD SUPERVISION & SUPPORT**
Are the children supervised at all times? What are the systems used for keeping track of the children each day? Is there a discipline policy? Are staff trained in school-age care and children with special needs? Get details on new camper orientation.

- FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**
How does the program communicate with families? Ask if families are welcome to the program at any time and if there are opportunities to get involved if interested.





CHILD CARE RESOURCES

CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL NETWORK (CCR&R)

Helps families find local, quality child care programs that fit their unique needs, community resources and financial assistance options.

1-866-357-3239 (Toll-free), (TTY:711)

www.floridaearlylearning.com/ccrr.aspx

DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES (DCF)

Responsible for child care program licensing and training throughout Florida and administers programs addressing issues such as background screening, adult and child protective services, homelessness, food stamps, refugee services and adoption and foster care.

1-866-762-2237

www.myflfamilies.com/childcare

FLORIDA ABUSE HOTLINE

Handles reports of abuse, neglect and exploitation of children and vulnerable adults (the elderly or adults with disabilities).

1-800-96-ABUSE (1-800-962-2873)

www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/abuse-hotline

AMERICAN CAMP ASSOCIATION

Offers expert advice on camp selection, readiness, child and youth development and issues of importance to families.

1-800-428-2267

www.acacamps.org

FLORIDA AFTERSCHOOL NETWORK (FAN)

Advocates for the development, enhancement, sustainability and accessibility of evidenced based high-quality afterschool and summer programs and policies statewide.

850-921-4494 Ext. 306

www.myfan.org

FLORIDA AFTERSCHOOL ALLIANCE

Provides leadership to support professionals and to promote quality programs for children and youth during out-of-school hours.

813-441-4405

<https://floridaafterschool.org>

NATIONAL RESOURCE FOR HEALTH & SAFETY

Promotes health and safety in out-of-home child care settings throughout the nation and provides licensing regulations from all 50 states.

1-800-598-5437

www.nrckids.org



DIVISION OF
Early Learning
LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE.





EARLY LEARNING
COALITION OF HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

What you need to know about the **CLASS** tool in child care

The early years of life are critical times to establish strong bonds between children and the adults in their lives. These adults play a critical role in preparing children for both school and life success. The types of interactions children have with adults plays a major role in helping develop social-emotional and academic competencies.

In Florida, the Division of Early Learning has chosen the CLASS tool to help define quality early education.



What Is CLASS?

The Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) measures the types and effects of the interactions between a child and their caregiver. The CLASS tool is used nation-wide to help inform families of what types of interactions they can expect in their child's early education program.

What does CLASS look like in action?

Children and teachers are smiling and laughing. Many positive conversations are happening! The classroom is a dynamic place with lots of fun and engaging activities to do. In preschool classrooms, children may have jobs or opportunities to be leaders. In younger classrooms, caregivers prepare children for different activities by explaining what is about to occur. Children are eager to engage with one another by their care givers. Children are typically asked questions to help prompt them to think about why things work and what can influence these processes.



SCAN ME
elchc.org
813.515.2340

6302 E. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Blvd.
Suite 100
Tampa, FL 33619



Begin your child care
search with **CLASS** in mind.

Division of Early Learning Community Resources Flyer



Child Support and Housing Resources

Child support services that include locating missing parents, establishing legal paternity, and establishing, enforcing and modifying support orders contact the Department of Revenue at 850-488-KIDS (5437) (Miami-Dade residents call 1-305-530-2600), or visit https://floridarevenue.com/childsupport/parent_services/Pages/default.aspx.

Department of Children and Families Office of Homelessness designated lead agencies provide supportive services and information to address the varying needs of people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. To locate your designated lead agency visit <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/homelessness> or call 850-922-4691.

A public housing agency or Section 8 Housing Choice Voucher Program offers rental housing for eligible low-income families, the elderly and persons with disabilities. Visit https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/contacts or call the Office of Public Housing at 1-800-955-2232 to obtain your local office.

Child Care Programs

Early Head Start and Head Start Programs are free, federally funded early learning programs for children birth to 5 years old. Eligibility for both programs is based on a family's income. For your local agency contact information and more details visit <http://www.floridaheadstart.org/program%20directory.html>.

Early learning coalitions are non-profit organizations located throughout Florida that locally administer the School Readiness Program (subsidized child care), Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program, a free program for Florida's 4-year-old children, and the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Program. For information on child care or to locate a local coalition, call the Division of Early Learning toll-free at 1-866-FL-Ready (357-3239) or visit <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/>.

Child Care Programs (cont.)

Military child care assistance is available to assist military families with the cost of child care. To learn more, call Child Care Aware of America at 1-800-424-2246 or go to <https://www.childcareaware.org/fee-assistance/erespite/>.

The Family Empowerment Scholarship

The Gardiner Scholarship is now the Family Empowerment Scholarship for Students with Unique Abilities (or FES formerly Gardiner). This scholarship for students with unique abilities is known as an Educational Savings Account (ESA) and functions like a bank account where you can withdraw funds to pay for your child's education, including Tuition/Fees for Private School or Homeschooling, textbooks, tutoring, therapies and more. To participate, parents must apply at <https://www.stepupforstudents.org/for-parents/special-needs/how-the-scholarship-works/>.

Food Resources

The Temporary Cash Assistance Program and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs (SNAP formerly known as the Food Stamp Program) information is available at the Department of Children and Families Access Florida hotline at 850-300-4323 or visit <https://www.myflorida.com/accessflorida/>.

Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC) is a federally funded nutrition program for women, infants, and children. WIC provides healthy foods, nutrition education and counseling, breastfeeding support, and referrals for health care at no cost. For your local WIC number, visit http://www.doh.state.fl.us/family/wic/pages/program_info/contact.htm or call 1-800-342-3556.

Medical and Special Needs Resources

Early Steps and Children's Medical Services offer intervention services to families and children, ages birth to 3 with disabilities or who are developmentally delayed. For more information call 1-800-218-0001 or visit http://www.cms-kids.com/families/early_steps_directory/index.html.

MATTHEW H. MEARS
CHANCELLOR, DIVISION OF EARLY LEARNING

325 W. Gaines Street • TALLAHASSEE, FL 32399 • 850-717-8550 • Toll Free 866-357-3239 • www.FloridaEarlyLearning.com



Medical and Special Needs Resources (cont.)

Exceptional Student Education, required under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, is offered for students ages 3 - 21 who have disabilities and students who are gifted. For details, visit <http://www.fldoe.org/academics/exceptional-student-edu/index.stml>.

Florida Diagnostic and Learning Resources System provides diagnostic, instructional and technology support services to district exceptional education programs and families of students with disabilities over 3 years of age. For more information call 850-245-0478 or visit <https://www.fdlrs.org/>.

Florida KidCare offers low-cost health insurance for children. To learn more about eligibility and program options, call 1-888-540-5437 or visit <http://www.floridakidcare.org/>.

Medicaid offers free medical coverage and benefits to children. Information is available at the DCF Access Florida hotline at 1-866-762-2237 or visit <https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/access/medicaid/>.

The Social Security Administration can offer disability, Supplemental Security Income, survivors benefits, and more call 1-800-772-1213 or visit www.socialsecurity.gov.

Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) Florida provides services to individuals with autism and related disabilities to their families and to the professionals who work with them. To learn more, call 850-245-0475 or visit <http://florida-card.org/>.

Workforce Resources

Employ Florida provides access to statewide and local workforce resources, assistance in searching for jobs, and building and posting resumes. For more information, call toll-free 1-800-438-4128 or visit <https://www.employflorida.com/>.

Reemployment assistance is available to Florida residents or individuals working in the state of Florida and to those who are unemployed or partially unemployed. For more information call 1-800-204-2418 or <http://floridajobs.org/job-seekers-community-services>.

Additional Resources

2-1-1 is an information and referral service for local services such as crisis intervention services, housing, support groups, counseling, financial assistance, transportation and more. Dial 2-1-1 or visit <http://www.211.org/>.

Domestic violence crisis intervention and support services to victims of domestic violence and their children are provided by certified domestic violence centers throughout Florida. For the center nearest you and information about safety planning, resources and referrals as well as emotional support call the Florida (available 24/7) Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-500-1119 or visit <https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/domestic-violence/overview.shtml>.





Additional Resources (cont.)

MyFloridaMyFamily developed by the Florida Department of Children and Families is a web-based platform, focused on connecting families in need with local organizations that can strengthen and assist, increase adoptive and foster parent recruitment and engage community and faith-based organizations with supporting their communities. For more information visit <https://www.myfloridamyfamily.com/>.

Healthy Families Florida is a nationally accredited home visiting program for expectant parents and parents of newborns experiencing stressful life situations. For more information visit <http://www.healthyfamiliesfla.org/index.asp> or call 850-488-1752.

The Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (HIPPY) program offers free, home-based early childhood education for 3, 4 and 5-year-old children. Home visitors work to support parent(s) to become their child's first teacher. To learn more, visit <http://floridahippy.fmhi.usf.edu/> or call 813-974-2177.

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) is a benefit for people who work and have earned income or are self-employed. EITC reduces the amount of tax you owe or may allow you a refund. For details, visit <http://www.irs.gov/Credits-&-Deductions/Individuals/Earned-Income-Tax-Credit> or call toll-free 1-800-829-1040.

Financial aid (for college students) may include student loans and grants through the financial aid department. These funds may help with the cost of child care. On-site child care services may be available for students and faculty. To explore options visit <http://www.studentaid.ed.gov/>.

Additional Resources (cont.)

Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) helps low-income families with home heating and cooling costs. For more information and local contact information, visit <http://www.floridajobs.org/community-planning-and-development/community-services/low-income-home-energy-assistance-program>.

SafeLink Wireless provides a free cell phone and airtime each month for income-eligible customers. To learn more and apply, call 1-800-SAFELINK (1-800-723-3546) or visit <https://www.safelinkwireless.com>.

School Choice options are available to Florida families through three scholarship programs. These programs allow parents choice among public and private schools:

Florida Tax Credit Scholarship
<https://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/ftc/>

McKay Scholarship
<https://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/mckay/>

Opportunity Scholarship
<https://www.fldoe.org/schools/school-choice/k-12-scholarship-programs/osp/>

