

Choosing Quality Child Care



Child Care Connections



The first five years of a child's life are critical learning years.

This checklist will help you identify a safe, high quality child care and learning environment for your child:

Learning

- Are the play spaces organized with age-appropriate toys and books, puzzles and blocks easy to reach and use?
- Does the child care program offer both structured and unstructured play time daily?
- Do providers frequently read and sing to children throughout the day?
- Does the child care program allow screen time?*

Program Enrichment

- Does the program participate in Montana's Best Beginnings STARS to Quality?*
- Is the program accredited by a national organization?*
- Does the program participate in the Federal food program (Child and Adult Care Food Program)?

Supervision

- Are children supervised at all times, including when they are sleeping?
- Are teachers warm, welcoming and interacting with each child?
- Are clear and simple safety rules established with the children?
- Do teachers focus on positive, clear, consistent and fair guidance?
- Are there enough staff members to supervise all children? Recommended guidelines for adult-to-child ratios in child care facilities are on the reverse side.

Health and Safety

- Do teachers follow standards for health and safety, including proper hand washing, diapering, and toileting?
- Is someone always present who has current pediatric (infant/child) CPR and pediatric first aid training?
- Is there a plan for responding to disasters (fire, flood, etc.)?
- Do the children go outside every day unless the weather or conditions don't support outdoor time?
- Is the playground regularly inspected for safety?
- Does the child care program support breastfeeding?
- Are infants held by adults during feeding?
- Does the child care program serve meals?

Professional Development

- Do the teachers and director have a credential or an early childhood-related degree?
- Have the Director and teacher(s) had specific training on children's development and experience caring for children?
- Do the director and teachers receive early childhood-related training or education?

Communication

- Are parents always welcome in the home or center and given a copy of the program's policies?
- Are annual conferences or regular and consistent communication held with parents?

Caregiver-to-Child Ratios

Below are the number of caregivers to children required in licensed child care in Montana.

Child Care Centers

Family Child Care

Centers serve 13 or more children with the following caregiver-to-child ratios:

Care is offered in a home setting for up to six children, only 3 of whom can be under the age of 2 years (6:1):

Children 0-23 months: 4 children per caregiver (4:1)
for up to 12 children



Children 2-3 years: 8 children per caregiver (8:1)
for up to 16 children



Children 4-5 years: 10 children per caregiver (10:1)
for up to 16 children



Children 6 years + : 14 children per caregiver (14:1)
for up to 16 children



Two caregivers offer care for 7 to 12 children, only 6 of whom can be under the age of 2 years (12:2):



Group Child Care

Family, Friend & Neighbor (FFN)

In this informal type of care, parents and legal guardians select an individual, often a family member, friend, or neighbor to care for all children in one family or up to 2 unrelated children.

****Note that drop-in, preschool, and before and after school programs are not required by the state to be licensed.*





For more information on or to become a licensed child care provider, visit: dphhs.mt.gov



FIND QUALITY CHILD CARE

 Contact our Family Engagement Coordinator, Amber at amber@cccmontana.org or (406) 548-3670 or by stopping by our office in Bozeman or Helena.

 Join [Child Care Share- Gallatin Area](#) or [Child Care Share- Helena Area](#). CCC administers these Groups which allows families and licensed child care providers to easily network, and share child care needs and resources.

 Contact CCC to learn more about the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship, and how to identify the best quality child care for your family.



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*National guidelines recommend children less than 2 years old have no screen time. For children 2 years and over the total screen time is less than thirty minutes each week, for educational or physical activity use only. This includes home and child care settings.

*The Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program is a voluntary quality rating improvement system that aligns quality indicators with support and incentives for early childhood programs and early childhood professionals.

*Accreditation indicates the program has been recognized by a leading national organization for providing excellent care.

This project is funded (in part) under a contract with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. The statements herein do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Department.