

3 Steps to choosing quality child care



**CHILD CARE
CONNECTIONS**

consider your choices

there are many types of care available

types of child care facilities

Child Care Center

A center serves 13 or more children, with a staff-to-child ratio based on the age of the children. Montana State law requires child-care centers to be licensed by the Child Care Licensing Program.

Adult - Child Ratios for Child Care Centers

The following chart represents the adult to child ratios for care within Montana's minimum licensing requirements.

Under 24 Months 1:4



4 to 5 Years 1:10



24-36 Months 1:8



5 Years to Kindergarten 1:14



36 Months- 4 Years 1:8



Family Home Care

This type of care is offered in a homelike setting for children ages 0-12. In a family home, a caregiver cares for up to 6 children at a time, with no more than 3 under the age of 2. It must be registered with the Montana's Child Care Licensing Program.

Group Home

This type of care has similar requirements to Family Home Care but with a higher number of children in care. 2 adults provide care for 7-12 children, with a limit of 6 children under the age of 2. It must be registered with the Montana's Child Care Licensing Program.

Legally Certified Provider (LCP) / Family Friend Neighbor (FFN)

In this more informal type of care, a parent or legal guardian selects an individual—often a family member, friend, or neighbor—to care for all the children in one family or up to two unrelated children. Children must be eligible to receive the Best Beginnings Child Care Scholarship. If you know someone who would like to become your LCP contact CCC for more information.

quality child care indicators

Child and Adult Care Food Program

Child Care Connections sponsors family and group child care homes through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). CACFP supports child care businesses by providing assistance with recipes, menu development, food purchasing, staff training, monthly meal reimbursement, examples of best practice for the feeding of children, and technical assistance for food service operations. Parents-Look for delicious and nutritious meals, clean kitchens, and pleasant eating areas when choosing child care.



Best Beginnings STARS to Quality Program

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 professionalism. To learn more about STARS to Quality visit, <http://dphhs.mt.gov/hcsd/ChildCare/STARS.aspx>.



National Accreditation

Since 1985, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has set professional standards for early childhood education programs, and helped families identify high-quality programs for their young children. Visit their website www.naeyc.org to search for accredited centers in the area. The National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) is the organization that facilitates accreditation for family child care homes. Accreditation shows an ongoing commitment to providing the highest quality of care for children.



Child Care Licensing Program

The role of the Child Care Licensing Program is to regulate and monitor child care facilities. Additionally, Child Care Licensing is responsible for protecting the health, safety and well-being of the children receiving care in Montana. Go to www.dphhs.mt.gov and click on "child care" to search for specific programs and view past licensing visit information.



need help finding child care?

Visit our website, www.cccmontana.org, or call 587-7786 to complete a child care needs form. This form will ask you detailed questions about what kind of provider will meet the needs of your family. We will then send you a list of child care providers in your area and information about each provider.

do you need help paying for quality child care?

Child Care Connections offers financial assistance through the Best Beginnings Scholarship for families to help with the cost of child care.



What is the Best Beginnings Scholarship?

The Early Childhood Services Bureau (ECSB) offers "Best Beginnings" child care scholarships to qualified families with low-income whose child receives care from a licensed child care center, registered group or family child care home, or legally certified child care provider. Each family participates in the cost of that care by making a co-payment based on a sliding fee scale. For more information contact Child Care Connections, 587-7786 or visit our website, www.cccmontana.org.

what is important to you?

think about this when considering your options

Structural Elements: Observable and Regulated by State Agencies

- Teacher education
- Group size
- Staff-to-child ratio
- Meals provided
- Transportation
- Safety
- Cleanliness
- DPHHS Licensed
- NAEYC & NAFCC Accredited

Process Elements: Child's Daily Experience

- Teaching philosophy
- Learning environment meets developmental needs (cognitive, physical, communication, social, emotional)
- Access to materials
- Shared values between home and school
- Accommodates special needs

Practical Elements: Needs of the Family

- Proximity to home
- Proximity to work
- Hours of operation
- Flexible scheduling
- Cost
- Scholarships available
- References
- Reputation
- Parent participation encouraged

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

Early Childhood professionals, who have early learning training and education, accelerate how our children learn, develop and build skills needed to succeed in life.

choosing **quality** child care

Consider these tips as you search for a safe, high-quality learning environment where your child can grow and thrive.

Health & Safety

- Is the program clean and well maintained?
- Do teachers follow standards for health and safety, including hand washing?
- Is someone always present who has current pediatric CPR and first aid training?
- Is there a plan for responding to disasters (fire, flood, etc.)?
- Do the children go outside every day unless the weather conditions do not support outdoor time?
- Is the playground regularly inspected for safety?
- Does the child care program support breastfeeding?
- Are infants held by adults during feeding?
- If providing food, does the child care program serve nutritious meals?

Supervision

- Are children supervised at all times, including when they are sleeping?
- Do teachers focus on positive, clear, consistent and fair guidance practices?
- Are there enough staff-members to supervise all children? (See the recommended guidelines for ratios in Step 1.)

Program Enrichment

- Is the program accredited by a national organization?
- Does the child care program participate in Montana's Best Beginnings STARS to Quality?

Learning

- Are the play spaces organized with age-appropriate toys and are books, puzzles and blocks accessible for children to 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? (National guidelines recommend children under 2 years have no screen time, and children 2+ years total screen time is less than 30 minutes each week.)

Training & Professional Development

- Do the teachers and director have experience and a credential or an early childhood related degree?
- Are teachers continuing to receive early childhood related training or education?

Communication

- Are the teachers using positive language while engaging with the children, each other and families?
- Are parents always welcome in the child care program and given a copy of the program policies?
- Do parents receive regular communication about the program and how their child is doing?

For more information please contact Child Care Connections, 587-7786 or visit us at 1143 Stoneridge Drive, Suite 1 (Bozeman) and 901 N. Benton Ave (Helena).

