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**Care Type**

- **Child Care Center**
  - Children are often age-grouped.
  - Group size may vary from groups of six infants to twenty or more preschoolers or school-aged children.
- **Family Child Care & Group Day Care Homes**
  - Group size may vary from 2-12 children.
  - Ages often vary, although some providers offer their services to specific ages (e.g., infants or preschoolers only).
- **In-Home Care**
  - Usually one child and sibling(s).
- **Rec Centers / Before & After School Care**
  - Range from 1 to 20 or more children.

**Group Size & Age Range**

- Usually more than one adult with children.
- Ratios vary depending upon the age of the child.

**Setting**

- Generally located in spaces adapted for child care purposes—businesses, storefronts, universities, schools hospitals & churches.
- Homes of all types located in most residential areas.
- Providers use all or part of their residence for care; some set aside space just for child care.

**Schedule/Flexibility**

- Open daily, year-round.
- Generally have fixed hours and schedules when children attend; most offer care between 7:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.
- Few offer care in the very early morning.

**Continuity or Care**

- Depending on the length of the child’s day, the child may have two or more teachers.
- Varies. Many providers consider themselves professionals and plan to work for many years; others work while own children are at home.

**Parent Involvement**

- Varies with each center.
- Some have parent advisory board and volunteer help from parents.
- Variety of ways for staff to communicate with parents—from daily notes and face-to-face conversations at drop off and pick up, to annual parent teacher conferences.

**Typical Advantages**

- Consistent, reliable; open daily year-round; availability not affected by teacher illness or vacations.
- Experiences based on curriculum that reflects principles of child development.
- Planned mechanism for involving and communicating with parents.
- Staff have training and experience with young children.
- Opportunities for children to interact with children their own age.
- Most common type of subsidized child care in most states.
- May have better access to resources and services for children with special needs than less formal options.

**Typical Disadvantages**

- May not meet needs of parents with late, early, rotating, or part-time work schedules; usually less able to accommodate fluctuations in parent schedules or emergencies.
- Usually unable to accommodate sick children.
- Larger group sizes and fluctuations in staffing may pose a difficulty for some children and families.
- Children attending a full-day center for only part of the day, or for less than a full week, may have more difficulty forming friendships or fitting in when most other children attend full time; they may lack a sense of continuity.

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