



The
**Children's
Cabinet**

How to Find Quality Child Care in Nevada

1-800-753-5500 | www.childrenscabinet.org



INTRODUCTION

Choosing child care is one of the most important decisions families make, but this decision is often difficult. The Children's Cabinet, northern Nevada's child care resource & referral (CCR&R) agency, is committed to helping parents find child care that meets their needs. The Children's Cabinet aims to provide the best information available to assist parents in their search for quality child care.

This guide can help you get started in your search for child care. It provides information on quality child care, steps to take to find quality child care, and a checklist you can use when making visits to potential child care providers.

To get a list of licensed child care providers in your area, contact The Children's Cabinet at 1-800-753-5500 or 775-856-6200 or visit us on our website at www.childrenscabinet.org.

WHY IS QUALITY CARE IMPORTANT?

1. **Brain Development.** Current research has shown that the early years (ages 0-5) are the most sensitive for brain development. Over 90% of brain growth occurs during this period. The people who help care for your child are also those who help shape your child's mind.
2. **School Readiness.** Studies show that children who receive high-quality child care enter school with better math, language, and social skills which are critical for your child to succeed in school and in life!
3. **Reduced Stress.** When your child has safe, loving, and stimulating child care that you can count on, you don't have to worry while you are at work. You know that your child is getting the kind of care children need to be healthy, happy, and successful.
4. **Everyone Benefits.** Society, children, families, employers, communities, and the nation as a whole benefit from high quality child care. Fostering a healthy, successful, future workforce is essential to everyone's well-being.



WHAT DOES QUALITY CARE LOOK LIKE?

Here are some general quality child care indicators to look for when you visit potential child care providers.

Children are comfortable, relaxed, happy and involved in play and other activities. Happy, relaxed children who are enjoying themselves as they play and learn is one of the best signs of a good program. There should be a variety of materials available for children in each age group.

Small groups of children with sufficient number of adults who have specialized training in early childhood development and education. The younger the child, the more supervision is needed. Training in child development and early education helps assure that staff understand how children grow and learn so they can be more effective teachers and caregivers.

Adult expectations that vary for children of different ages, interests and abilities. Toys, materials, and teachers' expectations should vary with the age of the children. Individual differences in children's abilities and interests should be recognized and respected.

All areas of child development are stressed equally, with time and attention being devoted to cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. High-quality programs do much more than help children learn numbers, shapes, and colors. They help children develop a love for learning, to question their world, get along with others, and use their developing language, thinking, and motor skills.

The staff meet regularly to plan and evaluate the program. A balance of outdoor and indoor play should be provided. Activities should allow time for children to work and play individually and in small groups. Staff should be willing to adjust the daily activities to meet children's individual needs and interests.

Parents are welcome to observe, discuss policies, make suggestions, and volunteer in the classroom. Close communication between parents and staff is vital. Staff should discuss children's highlights daily with parents and show respect for families of varying cultures and backgrounds.

The program is accredited. Programs that are accredited have gone beyond minimum licensing standards and have made a commitment to the nurturing and education children and their families deserve.

The program participates in Silver State Stars QRIS. Programs that participate in QRIS are dedicated to continuous quality improvement. Programs achieve a star-rating that reflect the level of quality provided*:



Highest Quality (Far exceeds high-quality)



Quality Plus (Exceeds high-quality standards)



Quality (Meets high-quality standards)



Progressing Star (Approaching high-quality standards)



Rising Star (Committed to quality improvement)



No Rating (Provider has chosen not to participate)

**Moving star levels takes a significant amount of time & effort.*

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT EARLY EDUCATION SETTINGS?

Licensed by Child Care Licensing

Child Care Centers are required to be licensed. This includes Head Start and Early Head Start. Licensing does not ensure quality but it does set a minimum health, safety and caregiver training requirements.

Family Child Care Homes offer care in the providers' home. Family child care providers can care for up to 6 children. Family child care providers can receive approval to care for 3 additional school-age children.

Group Family Child Care Homes generally offer care in the providers' residence. Often the home has a specific area for the children and has been approved to accommodate up to 12 children.

Licensed Exempt

District Pre-K & Early Childhood Special Education programs are operated by individual school districts for children ages 3-5 (age varies by program). Contact your school district for eligibility requirements.

Family, Friend & Neighbor (FFN) care takes place in the caregiver's or child's home. FFN caregivers receiving child care subsidy payments must meet training and background check requirements.

Recreation Programs or Camps are not required to be licensed in Nevada. This type of care is generally used for school-aged children for short periods of time (summer, holidays, before & after school.)



HOW DO I FIND QUALITY CARE?

Finding the right caregiver is often challenging, but one of the most important decisions you will make. Here are 6 steps to finding good child care:

1. **Start early.** Choosing a provider that is right for your child care takes some time. Many times providers have waiting lists, especially for infants. Your child should not be left alone with a provider until you can interview the caregiver(s) and visit the facility. Talking to many providers and visiting several programs will help you feel confident when making your decision. This takes time.
2. **Call your local CCR&R.** A CCR&R Specialist will ask a variety of questions to help locate care that best meets your and your child's needs. You will then get a list of licensed providers based on the information you provide. The CCR&R Specialist can also answer questions about licensing, financial assistance options, Nevada's Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS), and other community resources.
3. **Visit providers and ask questions.** Make sure you visit the child care options you are considering. When visiting providers, use the quality checklist included in this brochure and ask several questions! Find out how the environment feels to you and get references whenever possible! After visiting the provider, take notes about your experience and keep them with your checklist.

4. **Call licensing.** You will want to call child care licensing and ask if there have been any substantiated complaints against any of the providers you are considering.
5. **Make a decision.** Gather your notes and checklists from your visits and make a decision based on your observations.
6. **Stay involved.** Research shows that children have higher school achievement when they have families who stay involved in their care and education. Visiting and working with your child's provider sends a strong message to your provider and child, "My child's education, development, and safety is important to me!"

LICENSING NUMBERS BY COUNTY

Carson City, Churchill, Douglas, Lyon, Mineral, Pershing, Storey or Washoe	775-684-4463
Clark County & Southern Nye	702-486-3822
Elko, Esmerelda, Eureka, Humboldt, Lander, Lincoln, No. Nye, or White Pine	775-337-4470

FINDING CARE BY AGE & SPECIAL NEEDS

A child care setting that is appropriate for one child may not be appropriate for another depending on the age and the needs of the child. The following are special considerations by child's age and special needs.

Infants & Toddlers--Ages 0-2

It is important to match your child's personal style to the child care setting. The following table will help match your child's style to a setting that might better meet his/her needs.

Infants and toddlers have special health and safety issues to consider. In addition to the checklist on the following pages, make sure that the issues below are a top priority for your child care provider:

- Diapering, sleep, and food areas are kept separate.
- The diapering area is clean and sanitized after each diaper change.
- Staff keep one hand on children when diapering.
- Toys are checked for loose parts and sanitized on a regular basis.
- Children are held when bottle feeding.
- Infants are placed on their backs to sleep.
- Children are supervised at all times, including naps.
- Sleep environments should be dimly lit, quiet, and have a comfortable room temperature.

Your child's style...	Look for a setting that has...
<i>Personality--Pick a style that matches your child's most of the time.</i>	
Adaptable - flexible, approaches new people & situations with ease, good with transitions, etc.	Large groups that can provide social interaction and new experiences with peers.
Cautious - approaches new people & situations with caution, has difficulty with transitions	Small groups that are less overwhelming than large groups.
Feisty - passionate; has difficulty controlling his/her strong feelings, wants & needs	A primary caregiver for each child. Someone who knows and understands your child.
<i>How Does Your Child React to the World?</i>	
A Big Reactor - communicates his/her feelings and doesn't hold back	Caregivers who respect your child's emotions, but can help him/her to express them in a controlled way.
A Low Reactor - fusses very little, plays quietly	Caregivers who gently introduce new activities.
<i>How Active is Your Child?</i>	
High Activity - always on the go	Individual schedules, safe exploration and lots of active play.
Low Activity - sits quietly and explores through eyes & ears	Caregivers who engage children in sensory-rich activities.
<i>How Social is Your Child?</i>	
Super Social - okay with new people, likes interaction	Opportunities for group play.
Cautious - shy with strangers, needs warm-up time	Allows children to choose when they want to engage in group play.
<i>What is Your Child's Tolerance Level to Changes?</i>	
High - not bothered by changes, adapts easily	Mixed-age settings that offer challenges and stimulation
Low - sensitive to change, upset when daily routine is altered, easily frustrated	Same-age settings with routines that include developmentally appropriate activities & materials

FINDING CARE BY AGE & SPECIAL NEEDS

Pre-School Age Children (Ages 3-4)

Preschool-age children have better communication skills to voice what they like and do not like, making it easier to find an environment that fits your child's needs.

School-Age Children (Ages 5-12)

Your child deserves a rich learning environment that supports what he/she is learning at school. Activities and materials should interest your child, as well as nice quiet spaces for him/her to do homework.



Children with Special Needs

Even though every child has different needs, there are some basic requirements that any program should meet for children with special needs.

Consider the following:

- The program should include children with and without disabilities.
- The staff should be trained to provide care and any special handling/positioning techniques for children with your child's disability.
- Children should be encouraged to be as independent as their abilities allow. They should be restricted only in activities that might be dangerous for them or that have been prohibited by doctor's orders.
- The program should be flexible enough to adapt to slight variations in the children's abilities.
- The program should offer special equipment and activities to meet the special needs of children, or allow you to bring the equipment. The staff should be trained to operate equipment correctly.
- The staff should know each child's medical status and what symptoms require medical attention.
- The staff should know how to reach each child's physician in an emergency, and should be qualified to administer any necessary medications.

CHECKLIST FOR FINDING QUALITY CARE

Caregivers/Teachers

- Caregivers/teachers seem to really like children.
- Caregivers/teachers kneel down to the children's level when speaking with them.
- Children are greeted when they arrive.
- Children's needs are quickly met, even when things are busy.
- Caregivers/teachers are trained in CPR, first aid, communicable disease, and early childhood education.
- Caregivers/teachers are current on their continuing education requirements (24 hours per year).
- Caregivers/teachers are always ready to answer your questions.
- Caregivers/teachers tell you what your child is doing every day.
- Parents' ideas are welcomed and incorporated in the setting.
- Caregivers/teachers and children enjoy being together.
- There is enough staff to serve the children (low staff-to-child ratio).
- Guidance is clear, fair, and not physical or demeaning.
- Caregivers/teachers respond to individual needs of children.
- Caregivers/teachers are respectful of different cultures.

Activities

- There is a daily balance of play, activity, and nap times.
- The activities are appropriate for the child's age.
- There are enough toys and materials for the number of children.
- Toys are clean, safe, and within the reach of children.

COPY & TAKE THIS WITH YOU ON VISITS

Health, Safety & The Environment

- The atmosphere is bright and pleasant.
- There is a fenced outdoor area with a variety of safe equipment.
- There are different areas for quiet play, active play, and resting, with plenty of room for the number of children.
- Children are supervised at all times, even when sleeping.
- Caregiver(s) and children wash hands often, especially before eating and after using the restroom or diapering.
- Sanitation policies are written and posted (for multiple staff).
- Toys and equipment are checked for loose parts and other damage on a regular basis.
- The program has records indicating that all children are up-to-date on required immunizations.
- Program has an emergency plan in case a child is sick, injured, or lost.
- Program has a plan in case of disaster (e.g., fire, flood, earthquake) and practices the plan monthly.
- Poison control information and hotline numbers are posted.

General Considerations

- The program participates in Silver State Stars QRIS.
- You agree with the child guidance practices.
- You hear sounds of happy children and nurturing caregivers.
- Children are comforted when needed.
- The program is licensed or regulated.
- Parental involvement and unannounced visits are encouraged.
- Your child will be happy here.

THE ROLE OF CHILD CARE RESOURCE & REFERRAL

Help Parents Find Child Care

Child care resource & referral (CCR&R) agencies, like The Children's Cabinet, help parents take the guesswork out of choosing child care by giving referrals to licensed child care providers as well as information on quality child care, state and county licensing regulations, child care subsidies, and other community resources.

Support Families to Raise Healthy Children

CCR&Rs reach out to parents through parenting classes, e-newsletters, and other consumer education on child development and quality child care. Parents are the child's first and most important teacher.

Build the Supply of Child Care

CCR&Rs provide assistance to those who wish to become licensed to increase the capacity of child care in Nevada. CCR&Rs also work with local and state governments and the private sector to leverage resources to build and maintain the supply of quality child care.

Improve the Quality of Care

CCR&Rs offer training and onsite assistance to improve the quality of child care for all children. CCR&Rs advocate for providers in improving policies, regulations and wages.

Bridge Child Care and Education

CCR&Rs strive to create child care settings that help children grow and learn and educate the community about the critical importance of these settings for school and lifelong success.

Document Child Care Needs & Trends

CCR&Rs are the primary source of information about the local supply and cost of child care. With our comprehensive, well-maintained database, we are able to track trends about the demand, supply, accessibility, and quality of care in Nevada.