



## Child Care Options

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There are many different types of child care and early education programs.

**All** family child care programs must be licensed by the Department of Early Education & Care. Most center-based and school-age programs must also be licensed. Certain center based programs & public schools may qualify for license exempt status if they are overseen by an educational entity. To find out about the "**Licensing History**" of any licensed program, you may contact the Massachusetts Department of Early Education & Care at [978-681-9684](tel:978-681-9684).

**Family Child Care** means children are cared for in the home of the provider. Families choose this type of care because of the home setting, flexible hours, mix of ages and small group size. Providers may care for up to 6 children.

**Family Child Care Plus** means children are cared for in the home of the provider. Families choose this type of care because of the home setting, flexible hours, mix of ages and small group size. Providers may care for up to 8 children, depending on their ages (2 of the children must be school-aged) and provider's years of experience.

**Large Family Child Care** offers the home setting of family child care for up to 10 children. With more than 6 children, a licensed, certified assistant must be present in addition to the provider.

**Family Child Care Systems** are a formal network of licensed family child care homes coordinated by a central child care organization. Often, these systems provide social workers and/or educational coordinators who may be involved in training and recruiting providers and assisting them with issues and problems that arise. Transportation is also offered by most Family Child Care Systems.

**All Family Child Care providers must have current certification in First Aid & CPR. CORI checks are also run prior to licensure on all residents of a Family Child Care home.**

A voluntary form of accreditation a Family Child Care provider may choose to obtain is called [NAFCC](http://www.nafcc.org) accreditation. For additional information on [NAFCC](http://www.nafcc.org) accreditation go to [www.nafcc.org](http://www.nafcc.org).

**Child Care Centers** provide care for larger numbers of children for part or full day programs. Centers are organized to meet the needs of children and working families. They are usually open year round. Child Care Centers offer programs to a variety of age groups and vary in terms of educational philosophy, curriculum, costs and services.

**Nursery School or Preschool Programs** offer only part-time care, usually for children 2 years & 9 months to five years of age. The children have an opportunity to socialize with other children their own age and engage in a variety of organized activities.

**Head Start** is a child development program designed to promote the growth and development of children from low-income families. Children ages three to five years attend. Early Head Start provides learning and development services for families with children up to three. Both Head Start and Early Head Start may be provided in a center or home-based setting.

In ALL licensed center-based programs, basic adult:child ratios allowed by licensing are:  
Infants: 1:3    Toddlers: 1:4    Preschool: 1:10    School-Age: 1:15

Maximum Group sizes:

Infants: 7    Toddlers: 9    Pre-school Full Time: 20    Pre-school Half Time: 24  
School-Age: 30

In addition, licensing has specific health & safety regulations which must be met by all licensed center based programs.

A program may choose to have less children per adult than licensing allows.

A voluntary form of accreditation a Center Based Program may choose to obtain is called **NAEYC** accreditation. For additional information on **NAEYC** accreditation go to [www.rightchoiceforkids.org](http://www.rightchoiceforkids.org)

**Drop-in Care** programs provide short-term, back-up or immediate care for children.

**Before & After School (School Age Care - SAC) Programs** are usually located in schools, child care centers, family child care homes, churches or other settings that offer child care. These programs may be licensed or license exempt depending on their overseeing entity. SAC programs usually provide child care to kindergarten through sixth grade children before and after school, during school vacations and summer breaks.

A voluntary form of accreditation a School Age Program may choose to obtain is called **NAA** accreditation. For additional information on **NAA** accreditation go to [www.naaweb.org](http://www.naaweb.org). School Age Programs may also choose to be NAEYC accredited.

**Sick Child Care** services vary from a provider coming into the family's home to care for a sick child, to a program within a hospital staffed by health care professionals. Some family child care homes will also care for moderately ill children who are not contagious.

**Special Needs** arrangements can be found in all types of child care. Contact your local CCR&R agency for information about Early Childhood Special Education programs and services for your child.

### **Staff Turnover:**

Continuity is of primary importance to the quality of your child's care experiences. Nationally, early care & education staff have an annual job turnover rate between 25 and 40 percent. High turnover often means that experienced teachers are replaced by novice teachers, who may not share the educational qualifications of their predecessors. Ask any program you are considering about staff turnover rates.

