



Child Care in Ontario

Finding the right child care for your family

Child care should be an enriching and satisfying experience for both you and your child. As a parent, you want to be confident that your child is in a healthy, safe and happy environment. You also want a child care program that meets your child's needs as he or she grows and learns.

It is important to be informed about your child care options. You may choose licensed child care offered through:

- a program at a licensed child care centre
- a home-based child care provider who is contracted by a licensed private-home day care agency

or you may choose:

- informal (unlicensed) child care.

There are a number of factors to consider when reviewing child care options, including: location; hours of operation; ages of children served; activities offered; staff training; availability and cost. It may take time to find the best child care option for your child. It is important to start looking into your options early.

What is licensed child care?

In Ontario, a licence to operate a child care program is required if care is provided for more than five children under the age of 10. The ministry licenses child care centres and private-home day care agencies. Agencies contract with individual home-based child care providers who offer child care out of their own home. The agencies

screen, approve and monitor the home-based child care providers.

Licensed child care centres and private-home day care agencies must meet and maintain specific provincial standards that provide for the health, safety and developmental needs of children.

At least once a year, Ministry of Education staff conduct inspections of all licensed child care centres and private-home day care agencies, including a number of home-based providers in order to:

- make sure that provincial standards are being met
- issue and renew licences
- monitor operators who are having difficulty meeting licensing standards.

Ministry staff will also investigate complaints about licensed child care programs.

Licensing reports for all licensed child care centres and private-home day care agencies are available on Ontario's Licensed Child Care website at ontario.ca/licensedchildcare



What is informal (unlicensed) child care?

In Ontario, individuals may look after five or fewer children under 10 years of age without a licence, in addition to their own children, if in their own home. This applies regardless of the number of adults present at the location. This means that it is illegal for individuals to look after more than five children under 10 years of age, in addition to their own children, without a licence.

Informal (unlicensed) child care arrangements are made between the parents and the caregiver. Parents may choose informal child care arrangements for a number of reasons. For example, parents may have longstanding arrangements in their communities with neighbours and/or family friends.

Parents should be aware that in Ontario informal caregivers are not regulated. This means they are neither licensed nor inspected. As a result, they *are not* required to meet provincial standards. It is up to parents to research, choose and monitor their child care arrangements.

ontario.ca/EDUparents



What to do if you have concerns about your child's care

You should always feel confident that your child is in a healthy, safe and happy environment.

If you have concerns about your child's care, your first step should always be to talk to the staff or your caregiver.

When to call the Ministry of Education

Staff at the Ministry of Education follow up on complaints about licensed child care programs, as well as complaints about a person who may be providing care to more than five children under 10 years of age, without a licence.

If you have concerns, please contact your local Ministry of Education - Child Care Quality Assurance and Licensing regional office. To locate the regional office in your area, please visit www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/offices.html or call 1-800-387-5514.

Help with paying for child care

You may qualify for a child care fee subsidy to help you pay for licensed child care. Your municipal child care service system manager or First Nations band administrator can provide you with more information. For a list of system managers, visit ontario.ca/childcare and click on "Paying for Child Care."

Modernizing Ontario's child care system

On January 23, 2013, the government released the Ontario Early Years Policy Framework, which sets out a vision, guiding principles and strategic direction for early years programs and services for children age 0-6 and their families. The framework identifies the following priority areas for government action:

- continue with the implementation of full-day kindergarten by September 2014;

- create an effective approach to implementing Best Start Child and Family Centres by September 2014;
- improve the delivery of speech and language services;
- stabilize and transform the child care sector.

In June 2012, the government released the discussion paper, *Modernizing Child Care in Ontario: Sharing Conversations, Strengthening Partnerships, Working Together*, to seek input on how to strengthen and transform the child care sector. Building on the feedback received, the government remains committed to working with partners to modernize the child care sector and provide children and families with access to safe, reliable, and high quality child care services. Find the Ontario Early Years Policy Framework and more information on how Ontario is modernizing child care, at ontario.ca/childcare

More information:

Visit ontario.ca/childcare for more information on finding child care and how to prepare your child. Find licensed child care near you through ontario.ca/licensedchildcare

Find your closest Ministry of Education – Child Care Quality Assurance and Licensing Regional Office. **1-800-387-5514** (TTY: **1-800-263-2892**) or www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/offices.html

To find out more about other supports and resources for families with young children, such as **Parenting and Family Literacy Centres** and **Ontario Early Years Centres**, visit: www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare/choices.html

