

Great Start Regional Resource Centers

Ten Regional Resource Centers anchor the Great Start Child Care Quality Program for Michigan. In addition, Great Start CONNECT is Michigan's online Early Learning Resource for key information about quality child care and child development. Great Start Regional Child Care Resource Centers can help you find:

- Information and assistance on finding and choosing quality child care
- Financial assistance and scholarships for child care or to improve the child care setting
- Lending library of books, CDs, puzzles and other learning materials
- Learning kits
- Guidance for developing quality improvement plans
- Information about challenging behaviors

1-877-61GREATSTART
(1-877-614-7328)

Toll-free access to your regional resource center

www.greatstartCONNECT.org



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A Parent's Guide to Early Learning & Care in Michigan



A Checklist for Families of Children ages 0-5

Early learning and child care choices

The early years of a child's life are a critical time when the brain is forming connections that help determine a lifetime of skills and potential, affecting the way that children think, learn and behave. Child care that provides a loving, safe, stable and age-appropriate stimulating environment helps children enter school safe, healthy and eager to succeed. You have a right and responsibility to demand quality child care to help ensure your child's healthy physical, emotional, social and intellectual development.

Look for a child care setting that:

- Respects children and their families
- Partners with families to provide the best care and education for their children by:
 - Talking together and communicating regularly
 - Sharing strengths and establishing shared goals for children

Child Care Settings

There are a variety of settings that can provide quality child care. Child care centers and group child care homes must be licensed by the Department of Human Services Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing. Family child care homes are registered by the Department of Human Services Bureau of Children and Adult Licensing.

Child care centers. Child care centers are classroom-based programs that provide care and education for children including child care, prekindergartens, preschools, nursery schools, before and after school programs, and Head Start programs.

Group child care homes. Group homes provide care and education for up to 12 children with two or more adult caregivers.

Family child care homes. Family homes provide care and education for up to six children with one adult caregiver.

Unlicensed providers. An unlicensed child care provider is an adult who is 18 years or older and enrolled by DHS to provide care for up to 4 children at one time either where the child lives or provides care in their home. To qualify to provide care for the child in the provider's home, the provider must be related to the child(ren) by blood, marriage or adoption as a:

- Grandparent/great-grandparent
- Aunt/great-aunt
- Uncle/great-uncle
- Sibling

Assistance with child care

You may qualify for one of several child care assistance and scholarship programs in Michigan. To learn more about the DHS Child Development and Care Program or the Women's Caring Program Child Care Commitment, contact your Great Start Regional Child Care Resource Center at 1-877-614-7328.



Searching for child care

To find the very best setting for your child, you should visit more than one program with your child if possible. These steps can help you make a good choice.

The steps below include examples of questions that parents might ask child care providers. These steps are not intended to be exhaustive of the questions that families need to ask when searching for quality child care.



1 Visit www.greatstartCONNECT.org to search for child care.

- Click on the Child Care and Preschool button to begin your search.
- Click on the region where you live. You may then narrow your search to fit your specific needs, interests and preferences by clicking options such as program type, location, your child's age, schedule, special needs and experience desired.
- Answer a few demographic questions.
- You will receive a list of licensed and registered providers, including Head Start, Great Start Readiness Programs, and preschool, and may view state licensing reports for these providers or print information for each provider that you wish to contact.

Schedule a phone interview to ask...

- Is there an opening for my child?
- What ages do you serve?
- How many children do you care for and how many adults care for them?
- What child care experience, education and accreditation do you have?
- Must a child be toilet trained?
- What kinds of accommodation do you make for children with special needs?

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In a home setting...

- Are there others living in the home? If yes, who and what ages are they? Will they be caring for my child?
- Will my child be taken out of the home while in your care?
- Are there pets or smoking in the home?

Payment information

- How much do you charge?
- Do you charge for holidays, absences due to vacation or illness, or late pickups?
- Do you accept children who receive DHS child care subsidy?

Schedule a visit and look for...

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Caring Relationships

- Does the provider smile, talk and laugh with the children?
- Does the provider spend one-on-one time with the children?
- Do the children look happy and comfortable with their caregiver?

Learning Through Playing

- Are there a variety of toys and learning materials?
- Is there a daily routine with time for quiet and active play?

Health and Safety

- Are all indoor and outdoor spaces clean, safe and healthy? Look for safety features such as gates on stairs, caps on electrical outlets, and a locked cabinet for medicine, poisons and cleaning products.
- Are there areas where children can safely take a break from the group?

4 Ask the provider...

- Can I visit at any time?
- How do you handle discipline?
- What if my child needs extra attention?
- Is there one person responsible for knowing about my child and caring for them?
- Can children bring in comfort items from home?
- What is your plan for illnesses or emergencies?
- Do caregivers have up-to-date CPR and First Aid training?
- Can I talk with other families who have used your care?



5 Check references, review licensing reports and ask other parents...

- Would you recommend the caregiver?
- Did your child like attending this program?
- Was the caregiver reliable?
- How did the caregiver discipline your child?
- Was the caregiver respectful of your values and culture?
- How did the caregiver work to include you in the consistent care of your child?
- Is your child still with the caregiver? If no, why did you leave?

Make a decision that is best for your child and commit to being involved.

Ask yourself...

- Which caregiver should I choose so that my child will be happy and thrive?
- Is there a balance of free play and routines?
- Can the caregiver meet the unique needs of my child?

After choosing a child care provider, ask yourself how you can schedule your time to...

- Talk to the caregiver and work with him/her to discuss any problems that arise.
- Talk to your child about how their day went.
- Visit your child in care.
- Meet with other parents.

Does your child...

- Want to go to child care?
- Have fun there?
- Feel safe and comfortable?
- Feel respected and heard?

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