

Child Care Options

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There are many different types of child care programs. Almost all child care provided outside a child's home must be licensed by the state Department of Early Education & Care (EEC). To find the "Licensing History" of any licensed program, you may contact EEC at 508-798-5180 or visit their website at: www.eec.state.ma.us.

Family Child Care means children are cared for in the home of a provider. This type of care offers a home setting, flexible hours, a mix of ages and small group size. Providers may care for up to 6 children and are licensed by EEC.

Family Child Care Plus offers the same home setting as above. Providers may care for up to 8 children as long as 2 of those children are school age. Providers must have at least 3 years experience and are licensed by the EEC.

Large Family Child Care offers the same home setting as above. Providers may care for up to 10 children. With more than 6 children at any one time there has to be an EEC certified assistant working with the family child care provider. Providers must have at least 3 years experience and be licensed by EEC.

All Family Child Care providers licensed in MA are required to hold a current CPR and First Aid certificate.

Family Child Care Systems are a formal network of licensed family child care homes coordinated by a central child care organization. These systems may provide extra supports to providers and families. If you would like more information on this option, please call our agency at 1-800-278-1503.

Child Care Centers provide care for a larger number of children for either part or full day programs. Centers are organized to meet the needs of children and working families and most are open year round. Centers offer programs to a variety of age groups and vary in terms of philosophy, curriculum, cost and services. These programs are licensed by EEC or may be license exempt.

Basic adult/child ratio and group sizes allowed by the licensing agency is: **Infants:** 2 staff with a maximum group size of 7, **Toddlers:** 2 staff with a maximum group size of 9, **Preschool:** 2 staff with a maximum group size of 20.

A Center may choose to have fewer children per adult than the licensing agency allows.

Nursery School Programs offer part time care for children 2 years 9 months to 5 years old. The children have the opportunity to socialize and engage in a range of planned activities with children their own age. Most Nursery Schools are closed for the summer. These programs may be licensed by EEC or license exempt.

Public Preschool Programs are run by your local public school system. They offer part time care for children 2 years 9 months to 5 years old. Children have the opportunity to socialize and engage in a range of planned activities with children their own age. Most Public Preschool programs are closed for the summer. These programs are license exempt.

Head Start Programs are child development programs designed to promote growth and development of children from low-income families. Children who are 3 to 5 years old may enroll. Head Start programs may be located in a center or a home-based setting and may be licensed by EEC or license exempt.

Before & after School Programs may be located in schools, centers, family child care homes, churches or other settings. These programs are licensed or license exempt. School age programs usually offer care to children six through fourteen years old. They may offer before and/or after school care, school vacation and summer care.

Special Needs child care may be found in all types of child care settings. Please call Child Care Connection at 1-800-278-1503 for information about services.

Accreditation is a national, voluntary system to measure the quality of child care programs. Accreditation standards are often higher than state licensing regulations. Asking programs about whether they are accredited or if they have ever worked toward being accredited is one more way to learn about the program's quality.

- Family child care providers can attain the **National Association of Family Child Care** accreditation. This is a three year accreditation with renewal for five years. For more information, go to www.nafcc.org.
- Centers, private and public preschool and kindergarten can attain the **National Association for the Education of Young Children** accreditation. This is a five year accreditation. For more information, go to www.naeyc.org/accreditation.
- Afterschool programs can attain the **National Afterschool Association's** accreditation through the Council on Accreditation. This is a three year accreditation. For more information, go to www.naaweb.org.

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