

DO YOU NEED CHILDCARE?



If you seek quality in child care, this page can help. Quality in child care can make a big difference in the future of your child, your community - even the world. This choice gives your child a good start on a healthy mind, body, and spirit, and a better chance to become a productive adult. Take the time to choose wisely, and ask a lot of questions. This page has some general points about choosing quality child care.

Follow these five steps when choosing:

1. LOOK

Begin by visiting child care centres. On each visit, think about your first impression. Does the place look safe for your child? Do the caregivers who will care for your child enjoy talking and playing with children? Do they talk with each child at the child's eye level? Are there plenty of toys and learning materials within a child's reach? You should always visit a centre more than once, and get a good feel of what the care will be like for your child. And even after you start using the child care, continue to come back and check it out.

2. LISTEN

What does the child care setting sound like? Do the children sound happy and involved? What about the teacher's voices? Do they seem cheerful and patient? A place that is too quiet may mean not enough activity. A place that's too noisy may mean lack of control.

3. COUNT

Count the number of children in the group. Then count the number of staff members caring for them. Obviously, the fewer the number of children for each adult, the more attention your child will get. A small number of children per adult is most important for babies and younger children.

4. ASK

The knowledge and experience of the adults caring for your child are very important. Find out about the special training they each have. Ask about the background and experience of all staff: caregivers, teachers, and the program director. Ask the same questions about the other adults who will have contact with your child in the home or centre. Quality caregivers/teachers will be happy to have you ask these questions.


5. BE INFORMED

Find out more about the efforts in your community to improve the quality of child care. Is your caregiver involved in these activities? Has your child's caregiver achieved accreditation or completed training that exceeds minimum requirements?

A QUICK GUIDE TO CHILDCARE OPTIONS

Prepared by the Vancouver Childcare Support Program,
adapted to reflect Nova Scotia (NS) licensing regulations and/or guidelines

Please note that in any form of licensed group care in Nova Scotia, two thirds of teaching staff are required to have completed an Early childhood Education training program.



Type of Childcare	Ages	Minimum Staff Requirements>	Adult-Child Ratios
1. Group Daycare (NS)	17 months or younger ~ infants	Qualified Early childhood Educator First Aid Certificate required	1 educator to 4 children
2. Group Child Care (NS)	18 to 35 months ~ toddlers	Qualified Early Childhood Educator First Aid Certificate required	1 educator to 6 toddlers
3. Group Child	36 months to 5 years	Qualified Early	1 educator to 8

Care(NS)	~ preschool	Childhood Educator First Aid Certificate required	preschoolers
4. Out-Of-School Care (NS)	5 to 12 years	Meet the training requirements for staff in a facility First Aid Certificate Required	1 adult to 15 children
5. Part day programs (NS)	under5 years	Qualified Early Childhood Educator First Aid Certificate required	1 educator to 12 children
6. Family Daycare (NS) Licensed agency	Birth to 12 years	Responsible adult (18 years or older), in good health First Aid Certificate Required	Including the caregiver's own children, Six children of mixed ages (0-12), with no more than 3 of the children under3 years; or 8 if all school aged.
7. Unlicensed Child Care - License Not Required (NS)	Birth to school age,(attending school and up to 12 years)	Responsible adult with some experience	Where any child(including minders own children) is under school age, 1 adult to 6 children. Where all children (including minder's children) are school aged, 1 adult to 8 children

MORE ABOUT CHOOSING CHILDCARE

by the **Vancouver Child Care Support Program** and **Information Daycare**



You will want to choose quality child care for your child. It can be a challenge to find a child care arrangement you feel comfortable with. Here are some ideas that might help you make your choice.

A Quality Childcare Program Has:

- clean and safe space
- warm and friendly caregivers
- indoor and outdoor play
- healthy food
- many play and learning activities
- a daily routine

Childcare can be provided in your home, in someone else's home or in a centre. Quality childcare meets the needs of your child and your family. Take the time to visit several childcare programs and meet several caregivers. This will help you learn what is best for you and your child.

Before Looking For Childcare, Think About:

- the hours and days you need care
- your child's age and experience
- how much you can pay
- if you want your child in your home, or near your home, work, or school

A Gather Information:

Find out as much as you can about child care. You can:

- call the Department of Community Services
- phone Child Care Connection-NS
- look at the newspaper
- read the bulletin board at your community centre

- ask at your nearest school
- talk to your neighbours, friends, relatives, and people at work

Contact Caregivers:

Here are some questions you can ask:

- Is there a space for your child?
- Is the program licensed?
- Is the caregiver registered?
- What is the caregiver's experience and training?
- How much does it cost?

You can phone to ask these questions and more! Sometimes caregivers will be busy with the children and may want to call you back.

Arrange a visit if you are interested. You may want to visit a few times to learn about the program.

When you visit:

Look around

- Is the space safe and clean?
- Are there many toys and activities?
- Do you feel comfortable about your child being there?

Watch the caregiver with the children

- Do they like being together?
- Do you feel comfortable with the way she talks to the children?
- Has she planned activities for the day?

Look at the other children

- Do they enjoy their activities and each other?
- Can they choose their own activities?
- Do they come to the caregiver easily to talk and ask for help?

Discuss the program and ask about

- Sickness policy
- Discipline policy
- Vacations

- Field trips
- Visitors
- Other questions you have

Make your decision:

Before you make a final decision, it's a good idea to talk to other parents who know the caregiver or the child care program. You can ask them about the same kinds of things you looked for when you visited the caregiver.

Expect to sign a written letter that describes the details of the child care arrangement. If there is no letter ask for one, or refer to the [example written letter](#) on this website. You and the caregiver need to read it carefully together. Once you have made your decision, both you and the caregiver will need to sign the letter.

Gradual Entry:

It is a good idea for children to come for short periods of time at first. This "gradual entry" will help your child feel comfortable. Discuss gradual entry with the caregiver. Set times to suit your family, your child, your schedule, and the child care program.

Your relationship with the caregiver:

It is important for you to get along with the caregiver. Take some time every day to talk with the caregiver. Let her know you appreciate the care she gives to your child. Talk about any worries you have about your child's care or behaviour.

For more information:

Call Child Care Connections at 423-8199 in Metro and 1-800-565-8199 toll-free in Atlantic Canada.

Report any serious concerns you have with the Provincial Department of Community Services.