

Parents' Guide to Selecting and Monitoring Child Care in BC



Table of Contents

Choosing a child care arrangement for your child is an important decision. It takes time, planning and patience to find the right care provider – ***But it is worth the effort!***

This booklet describes child care choices available to BC families, and provides information to help you decide on the child care arrangement that best suits your child and family. The booklet also outlines subsidies available to help parents pay for child care.

| | |
|--|---------|
| The Early Years | page 3 |
| Child Care, How to find it | page 4 |
| Licensed or Unlicensed | page 5 |
| Licensed Child Care Options | page 6 |
| 1. Group Child Care | |
| 2. Group Child Care (School Age) | |
| 3. Preschool | |
| 4. Family Child Care | |
| 5. In-Home Multi Age Child Care | |
| 6. Multi Age Child Care | |
| 7. Occasional Child Care | |
| Unlicensed Child Care Options | page 10 |
| 1. License not required (LNR) | |
| 2. Registered LNR | |
| 3. In the Child's Own Home | |
| Choosing Child Care | page 11 |
| •Gathering Information | |
| •The First Call | |
| •Observing the Child Care Setting | |
| Observing the Child Care Setting: Checklist | page 14 |
| •The care providers, daily program and the environment | |
| •Meeting with the care provider | |
| Making Your Decision | page 20 |
| •Making your child's transition to child care successful | |
| •Signing an Agreement | |
| Monitoring the Child Care Setting | page 22 |
| Financial Support | page 23 |
| •Child Care Subsidy | |
| •Universal Child Care Benefit | |
| •Supported Child Development Payment Program | |

The Early Years of a child's life are vital

The care and early learning opportunities children receive in quality child care settings helps children develop physically, intellectually, emotionally and socially. A quality child care setting helps to prepare children for school, and enables parents to work or study knowing their child is well cared for.

Scientists and researchers around the world suggest that the brain growth and development of infants and young children is deeply affected by their early experiences. Positive experiences early in a child's life have been shown to have an important impact on their development, and help them to succeed later in life. This is the time when parents, can help to set the foundation for their children's lifelong development.

Finding the right care arrangement for your child is one of the most important decisions you will make as a parent, because that care provider will have a significant impact on your child's life. Choose a care provider who will work with you as a partner in your child's development, one who will respect and support your ideas, and who will nurture and stimulate your child – in short, a care provider who will provide you and your child with quality child care.

Quality Child Care is built on co-operation and trust, and leads to rewarding relationships involving children, parents and care providers. Care providers should genuinely like children; understand their differences; be able to recognize behaviour that indicates that a child needs help; be aware of cultural and religious diversity; and should provide stimulating activities designed for different children's age groups, interests and developmental levels.

A quality child care arrangement has care providers who nurture children's development and provide an environment that:

- has a happy, relaxed atmosphere;
- ensures children are well supervised, safe and secure;
- demonstrates positive behaviour guidance;
- is well planned and inviting;
- promotes children's self-esteem and independence;
- offers age-appropriate stimulating activities that help children learn and grow;
- is clean, healthy and comfortable;
- has quiet space for rest or sleep;
- offers a range of books, creative materials, toys and both indoor and outdoor play areas and
- encourages parents to become involved in their children's care.

Parents can recognize quality child care by looking for characteristics in the setting and provider that will help ensure the well-being of their children, and by asking questions to feel confident that their child is well cared for.

Child Care - How to find it

Your choice of child care arrangement will depend upon a number of factors, including:

- Your child's age;
- Your schedule (what hours and days of the week you need care for your child);
- Whether you want child care in your home, near your home, work or school
- Your ideas about how your child should be treated and raised;
- What child care is available in your community; and
- What your family can afford to pay.

The Child Care Resource and Referral Program (CCRR) of British Columbia works in partnership with community and government to enhance the availability and accessibility of a range of flexible, responsive and inclusive quality child care options and services that support the needs of children, families and child care providers.

The CCRR is a good source of information on child care services in your community and can provide you with referrals to local care providers and information and applications for government subsidies for child care.

*To locate a CCRR program in your community call 1-888-338-6622
Visit www.crr.bc.ca/*

The local health authority community care licensing program may also be able to provide you with a list of licensed child care facilities.

*To contact the health authority community care licensing program closest to you, visit The
Community Care Licensing Branch at
www.health.gov.bc.ca/ccf/*

*Enquiry BC: Victoria: 250 387-6121, Vancouver: 604 660-2421
Elsewhere in B.C.: 1 800 663-7867, Outside B.C.: 604 660-2421*

Licensed or Unlicensed Care

In British Columbia, there are two categories of child care: licensed and unlicensed (may also be known as licence-not-required {LNR}).

Whether or not a child care program needs a licence depends on a few factors such as how many children a care provider is looking after, how long the program is offered for and what the main goal of the program is.

Some programs that offer specific outcomes such as tutoring, or recreation activities (athletic, musical or artistic skills) may not be required to have a license. Municipally funded and operated programs that are two hours or less each day and summer or day camps for children age 5 years or older may also not require a license.

Licensed child care programs must meet and comply with the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act* and the Child Care Licensing Regulation. The Child Care Licensing Regulation sets out health and safety requirements, licence application requirements, staffing qualifications, staff to child ratio, space and equipment, and program standards. Additionally the schedules in the regulation include a list of approved Early Childhood Education programs and first aid requirements.

You can view the Child Care Licensing Regulation at www.health.gov.bc.ca/ccf/

Health Authorities administer Community Care Licensing programs across BC, which locally deliver the services related to the licensing and safe operation of child care facilities, this included monitoring to ensure facilities continue to meet provincial regulations and investigating complaints. If you have a concern about a licensed child care facility you contact your local health authority community care licensing program.

To contact the health authority community care licensing program closest to you, visit The Community Care Licensing Branch at www.health.gov.bc.ca/ccf/faq.html

*Enquiry BC: Victoria: 250 387-6121, Vancouver: 604 660-2421
Elsewhere in B.C.: 1 800 663-7867, Outside B.C.: 604 660-2421*

Licensed Child Care Options

1. Group Child Care

Group child care centres serve children from 30 months to school entry (Grade 1), and children from birth to 36 months (known as infant/toddler care).

Group centres offer year-round, full-day care, typically opening between 7:00/8:00 a.m. and closing between 5:00/6:00 p.m. Part-time spaces may be available in some centres and some may offer before or after kindergarten care.

| Children's Ages | Over 30 months | Under 36 months |
|-----------------------------|--|--|
| Maximum group size | 25 children | 12 children |
| Staff/child ratio | 1 Early Childhood Educator and 2 Early Childhood Educator Assistants | 1 Infant/Toddler Educator, 1 Early Childhood Educator, and 1 Early Childhood Educator Assistant |
| Staff qualifications | <i>Licensed*</i> Early Childhood Educator and <i>certified*</i> Early Childhood Educator Assistant, hold a valid first aid certificate and a clear criminal record check*. | Licensed Infant/Toddler Educator and certified Early Childhood Educator Assistant, hold a valid first aid certificate and a clear criminal record check. |

2. Group Child Care (School Age)

Group Child Care (School Age) serves school-age children (including kindergarten) who require care outside normal school hours. Some facilities provide care both before and after school; as well, some may provide full-day care on days when school is not in session. Full-day, summer programs and before and after kindergarten care may also be options facilities provide to parents.

| Children's Ages | Kindergarten or Grade 1 | Grade 2 or higher |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Maximum group size | 20 children | 25 children |
| Staff/child ratio | 1 <i>responsible adult*</i> for every 10 children | 1 responsible adult for every 15 children |
| Staff qualifications | 19 years of age, 20 hours of training, valid first aid certificate and a clear criminal record check. | 19 years of age, 20 hours of training, valid first aid certificate and a clear criminal record check. |

3. Preschool

A child is eligible for preschool if they are at least 30 months old and have not yet entered grade 1. Some preschools provide separate sessions for 3 and 4 year-olds, while others serve mixed age groups.

Preschools are part-day programs (maximum four hours), typically operating during the school-year, September to June. Some preschools may require parents participate in the program some of the time.

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Children's Ages | 30 months to 5 years |
| Maximum group size | 20 children |
| Staff/child ratio | 1 Early Childhood Educator for every 10 children 1 Early Childhood Educator and 1 Early Childhood Educator Assistant for a group of 20 children |
| Staff qualifications | Licensed Early Childhood Educator and certified Early Childhood Educator Assistant, hold a valid first aid certificate and a clear criminal record check. |

4. Family Child Care

Licensed family child care is care that is provided by the operator in their own home, to children from birth to age 12. Care providers set their own hours; most provide full-day care. Part-time spaces and flexible hours may be available in some facilities; and some may also offer before or after school care for kindergarten and school age children.

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Children's Ages | 0 - 12 years |
| Maximum group size | 7 children at any one time. Of those 7 no more than 3 children may be younger than 48 months old and of those 3 children no more than 1 child may be younger than 12 months old. If no child younger than 12 months old is present than of the maximum 7 children, 4 children may be younger than 48 months old and of those 4 children, no more than 2 children may be younger than 24 months old. |
| Staff/child ratio | 1 Responsible adult for 7 children |
| Staff qualifications | 19 years of age, 20 hours of training, valid first aid certificate and clear criminal record check. Additional criminal record checks are completed on family members and any one else who lives in the home over the age of 12 years. |

5. In-Home Multi Age Child Care

In-Home Multi Age Child Care is similar to family child care; care is provided by the operator in their own home, to children from birth to age 12, the care provider must have an Early Childhood Educator license to practice. Care providers set their own hours; most provide full-day care. Part-time spaces and flexible hours may be available and some may also offer before or after school care for kindergarten and school age children.

| | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Children's Ages | 0 – 12 years |
| Maximum group size | 8 children at any one time. Of the 8 children no more than 3 children may be younger than 36 months old and of those 3 children no more than 1 child may be younger than 12 months old. If no child younger than 12 months old is present, than of the 8 children, 3 children may be younger than 36 months old. |
| Staff/child ratio | 1 Early Childhood Educator for 8 children. |
| Staff qualifications | Must be licensed in BC as an Early Childhood Educator, hold a valid first aid certificate and have obtained a clear criminal record check. Additional criminal record checks are completed on family members and any one else who lives in the home over the age of 12 years. |

6. Multi Age Child Care

Multi Age Child Care is similar to Group Child Care but serves children from birth to age 12; children are divided into groups of 8 in a group setting. Most programs provide full-day care.

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Children's Ages | 0 – 12 years |
| Maximum group size | 8 children per group. Of the 8 children no more than 3 children may be younger than 36 months old and of those 3 children, no more than 1 child may be younger than 12 months old. If no child younger than 12 months old is present, than of the 8 children, 3 children may be younger than 36 months old. |
| Staff/child ratio | 1 Early Childhood Educator for each group of 8 children. |
| Staff qualifications | Must be licensed in BC as an Early Childhood Educator, hold a valid first aid certificate and have obtained a clear criminal record check. |

7. Occasional Child Care

Occasional child care is care for children who are 18 months or older. Care is provided on a part time or occasional basis only. A maximum of 40 hours per month with no more than 8 hours of care per day

| Children's Ages | If children under 36 months are present | If no children under 36 months are present |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Maximum group size | 16 children | 20 children |
| Staff/child ratio | 1 responsible adult for every 4 children | 1 responsible adult for every 8 children |
| Staff qualifications | 19 years of age, 20 hours of training, valid first aid certificate and clear criminal record check. | 19 years of age, 20 hours of training, valid first aid certificate and clear criminal record check. |

Staff qualifications

*A licensed Early Childhood Educator (ECE) has completed an approved Early Childhood Education training program, demonstrated related work experience, provided character and work references, and is licenced to practice through the Early Childhood Educator Registry of BC. An ECE licence to practice expires every five years; to renew a person must demonstrate 400 hours of relevant work experience, provide references and complete 40 hours of professional development training.

* A certified Early Childhood Educator Assistant (ECEA) has completed one early childhood education class in child growth and development, health, safety and nutrition or child guidance, demonstrate related work experience, provide character and work references *and* is certified through the Early Childhood Educator Registry of BC. An ECEA certificate expires every five years; to renew a person must demonstrate 400 hours of relevant work experience, provide references and complete a post-secondary class related to ECE.

For more information about Early Childhood Education visit www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/ece

* A responsible adult is 19 years of age or older, is able to provide care and mature guidance to children, has completed a course, or a combination of courses or workshops equaling 20 hours in the areas of child development, guidance, health and safety, or nutrition, and has relevant work experience.

Criminal Records

*All individuals who work with children, or have unsupervised access to children in the ordinary course of their employment, in the practice of an occupation, or registered students in a post secondary institution who will work with children are included under the *Criminal Records Review Act*.

For more information visit www.pssq.gov.bc.ca/criminal-records-review

Unlicensed Child Care Options

Unlicensed or Licence-not-required (LNR) child care providers can only care for two children or one sibling group (brothers and sisters) of any age, that are not related to the care provider by blood or marriage, at any one time.

LNR care providers may or may not have had formal child care training or previous child care experience. Care providers set their own hours of operation, fee schedules and operating policies. Parents are solely responsible for assessing and monitoring the quality of care provided in any unlicensed child care arrangements.

LNR child care providers are encouraged – *but not required* – to register with their local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) program. Registration means these care providers have met a number of important requirements, such as:

- Criminal record check (for everyone over age 12 living in the home);
 - Character references;
 - Home safety assessment;
 - Physician's report on their physical and emotional capacity to care for children;
 - First aid training; and
 - Participation in child care training courses or workshops.
- ≈ *It may also mean they have access to group liability insurance information.*

1. Licence Not Required Child Care (LNR)

LNR child care is care provided by the operator in the care providers own home. Care may only be provided for two children or a sibling group, of any age that are not related to the care provider.

2. Registered Licence Not Required Child Care (RLNR)

RLNR child care is also care provided by the operator and located in the care providers own home. Like an LNR, care may only be provided for two children or a sibling group, of any age that are not related to the child care provider. A child care provider who is “registered” has met health and safety requirements, and must continue to meet all requirements, with their local CCRR program. Being a RLNR also means families that attend the program may be eligible to receive an enhanced Subsidy rate which is higher than what an LNR would receive.

3. In Child's Own Home

This type of care is where you arrange for someone to look after your child in your own home. An in-own-home care provider may be called a nanny, an au pair or a babysitter. Parents may hire an in own-home care provider directly or use a “nanny agency.”

Parents using in-own-home care are considered employers and must make both Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan Payments and should contact both Canada Revenue Agency and the Worker's Compensation Board to find out more about obligations as an employer.

Choosing Child Care that's Right for You and Your Child

Gathering Information

You may need child care right now, or some time in the future. You may be flexible in terms of location, hours and fees, or you may have very specific needs. Whatever your particular case, it is always a good idea to begin by developing a list of the things you feel are important to you and your child – such as the hours and location of care, qualifications of care providers, approach to raising children and behaviour guidance.

If you have a child who needs extra support, you may also want to identify your child's unique needs, strengths and interests. Include any special concerns you may have about your child's ability to enjoy, participate in and benefit from child care. Also, list any precautions or health concerns a care provider may need to know about (e.g. what to do if your child has a seizure, has allergies or requires the use of support equipment).

Call a number of child care settings to ask some basic questions and see which meet your requirements, and then follow up with a visit to the ones that really interest you. You may want to visit more than once, and at different times of the day to narrow down your list, and then take your child along to visit your final choices. Remember to check references and to talk to parents who have children in the child care setting. If the child care facility is licensed you may also ask to see a copy of their most recent inspection report.

In Child's Own Home

If you are interested in care provided in your own home, your questions will be different. It is important that you take some time to learn about the care provider's background, experience with children and approach to child care.

It's a good idea to ask the care provider for references and documentation from the police that she or he does not have a criminal record. It's also a good idea to put together a written agreement, describing the days and hours of work, the care provider's specific terms of employment and your responsibilities as an employer.

Supported Child Development

Some children require extra support to take part in day-to-day activities; Supported Child Development (SCD) is a program that supports children with extra support needs to participate in the child care setting their parents think is best for them.

The program is intended to serve children from birth to 12 with services for youth 13-19 available in some communities. Operating under the principles of inclusion support may take place in regular licensed child care settings, group child care centres, preschools, family child care – or both.

For more information about Supported Child Development, please contact your local Ministry of Children and Family Development office or visit the SCD website: www.scdp.bc.ca See page 23 of this booklet for information on the Supported Child Development Program.

The First Call

Begin your call by describing your situation and needs. Questions you might want to ask in this first phone call may include:

- Are you licensed under the *Community Care and Assisted Living Act*?
 - If you are licensed, can I see a copy of your most recent inspection report? Is your program currently under investigation by the local health authority?
 - If you are not licensed, are you registered with the local Child Care Resource and Referral program?
- How many children do you care for?
- What ages are the children in your care?
- What are your hours of operation? What days are you closed?
- What are your fees? What is your refund policy?
- What child care experience/training do you (or any other care providers) have?
- Do you accept children who require extra support? Why/why not?
- Are you willing to adapt your program to meet the needs of a child who requires extra support?
- Does your program have any special features?
- What do you do with the children over a typical day/week?
- Can you give me at least two references, preferably of parents whose children attend your child care setting?
- Who supplies diapers/blankets/meals/snacks – parent or provider?
- What are the arrangements for when you (or other care providers) are ill, on holiday, or in case of emergency?
- Do you encourage parent involvement? Can I visit whenever I wish?
- Does anyone in your child care setting smoke? (*Note: Smoking is not permitted on the premises of licensed facilities when children are present*).
- When can I come visit your center? Can I bring my child?
- Do you have a space available? If not:
 - Is there a waiting list? How long is the waiting list?
 - Do you know of any other centres or care providers with vacancies?

Observing the Child Care Setting:

If you find a child care setting you like from that first phone call and there is space available, set a time to go and observe the child care setting and meet the care provider.

Since there is much to look at and talk about, you may want to use the following checklist as a tool to help you remember what you've seen. The checklist will help you look for important indicators of quality child care. Space is provided for you to note your observations and assist you to make an informed decision.



Name of Child Care Facility: _____

Type of Child Care Setting: _____

The Care Providers

The quality of the relationship between children and their care providers is the most important factor in assessing quality care. When your child is away from you, your child needs people to trust – people who genuinely enjoy children, make them feel secure, give individual attention and provide a rich environment for play and learning.

| Does the care provider(s): | Notes: |
|---|--------|
| Listen to children when they speak and respond with interest and respect. | |
| Accept and value the children's ideas and suggestions. | |
| Set reasonable limits for behaviour and respond to inappropriate behaviour in a fair and consistent manner. | |
| Respond with care and understanding to a child who may be fearful, shy, upset, hurt or angry. | |
| Encourage children to cooperate with each other, share and take turns. | |
| Display a sense of humour. | |
| Make the children feel good about themselves and other people. | |
| Take time to talk to/play with children individually. | |
| Initiate conversations with the children other than instructions, commands and announcements. | |
| Promote problem-solving skills and a sense of independence. | |
| Allow children a choice in many situations. | |
| Speak to each other, children and you calmly and respectfully. | |
| Supervise the space at all times. | |

The Daily Program

Children’s time in a program is important and contributes greatly to their development. Exposing children to a variety of activities and experiences will stimulate cognitive development and imagination, and build confidence and self-esteem.

The program should consist of age and developmentally appropriate activities, learning experiences, routines, and staff/child interactions. Daily opportunities may include sand and water play, dress up and pretend play and outdoor activities. Books, puzzles and art supplies should be readily accessible for children’s exploration.

| Does the child care program: | Notes: |
|---|--------|
| Allow for both individual play and group play. | |
| Provide opportunities for children to explore the environment in different ways such as through music and movement, dress up/pretend play, games, art, construction toys, and outdoor play. | |
| Offers a balance between free (unstructured) play, and organized (adult led) activities. | |
| Have a consistent yet flexible schedule. | |
| Follow routines for rest, toileting and mealtimes in a relaxed manner. | |
| Monitor television/video/computer (if used) program content and viewing times and length. | |
| Reflect our multicultural society. | |
| Practice proper hand washing and toileting/diapering. | |
| Provide drinks and snacks that are healthy and nutritious. | |
| Have a care philosophy that fits with your own beliefs about how children should be raised. | |

The Physical Environment

Space that is attractive and thoughtfully organized contributes to the overall function of the child care setting, the amount of space, access to the outdoors, arrangement of rooms, availability of materials, air quality, equipment, and lighting play a role not only in safety and health but in children’s well-being, happiness and creativity.

Ask to see the kitchen and eating area, washroom and sleep areas, as well as indoor and outdoor play activity areas.

| Is the child care setting: | Notes: |
|-------------------------------|---|
| | Safe (cupboards with cleaning agents are locked; kitchen knives are out of reach, stairs are gated etc). Are the toys clean, safe and in good repair. |
| | Warm, inviting and appealing, are there a variety of toys and activities and materials available. |
| | Well lit, comfortable in temperature with child sized furniture and equipment. |
| | Clean, organized, well-maintained and safe. |
| Does the environment include: | |
| | Areas for both quiet and active play, an area for children to be alone, are the play materials inside and out, age and developmentally appropriate. |
| | A safe and easily accessible outdoor play area. |
| | A variety of safety precautions; fire extinguishers, stairway gates, smoke detectors and electrical outlet covers. |

For parents of children who require extra support:

- *Look closely at the indoor space available at each child care setting, particularly if your child needs more space to move, to manipulate a wheelchair or use support equipment.*
- *Outdoors, you may want to make sure there is enough space for your child between and around swings, slides, etc. You should also look carefully at the playground surface. A gravel surface or stairs, for example, may not be suitable for a child who uses a wheelchair or walker.*

Meeting With the Care Provider

Child care involves both a business relationship and a caring partnership. In addition to comments and questions regarding what you have (or have not) observed, an open discussion about what you can expect of care providers and what they can expect from you will help avoid misunderstandings and build the basis for a good relationship in the future.

| | |
|--|---------------|
| <i>Some questions you may wish to ask the care provider:</i> | <i>Notes:</i> |
| Why did you become a child care provider? | |
| What is your training and experience? | |
| What is the most satisfying part about caring for children? | |
| How long have you been a care provider? | |
| Are you licensed? How many children are you licensed to care for? | |
| How many children are in your program? | |
| How many staff are in your facility? What training/qualifications do they have? | |
| How long have the staff been working with you? | |
| Do you/staff have first aid training? | |
| Do you have gradual entry/orientation for new children to become comfortable in your facility? | |
| How do you handle difficult behaviours? (e.g. a child who was biting or refuses to eat) | |
| How do you guide children who misbehave? | |
| What arrangements do you have for children who do not sleep at rest time? | |
| Where are medications stored, who administers them, and how are they administered? | |

| | |
|--|--------|
| Do you encourage parental involvement or assign parental responsibilities? | Notes: |
| Can I call or stop by regularly to find out how my child is? | |
| What are your procedures if a child falls ill or in case of an accident? What about emergency preparation and fire drills? | |
| What are the arrival and departure times? What if I am late picking up my child? | |
| What is your pre-payment and refund policy? | |
| How much notice do I have to give if I want to withdraw my child from your facility? | |
| How much notice is needed when I want to take my child away on vacation? Am I charged when my child is on vacation or away ill? | |
| What happens when you are ill? Who will replace you? Do they have experience and training caring for children? | |
| If you close the facility for a day/week and I have to find alternate care will I still be charged by you? | |
| Do you have liability insurance? (Insurance is not required, but strongly recommended.) | |
| Is your facility linked with other services in the community (drop-in programs, schools or others)? | |
| Are there other professionals who work in the centre? If so, who are they and what do they do? | |

Licensed child care facilities must have a written statement describing the methods of guidance and discipline that they use. The Child Care Licensing Regulation prohibits the use of physical punishment, humiliation, and other discipline methods that undermine a child's self-esteem.

There are many approaches related to guidance and discipline, the goal remains constant: to build children's self-confidence and encourage socially acceptable behaviour. A booklet called Guiding Children's Behaviours may be helpful and available through your local health authority or at www.health.gov.bc.ca/ccf/publications/index.html

Unlicensed/Licence-not-required child care provider

Unlicensed - Licence-not-required (LNR) or Registered License-not-required (RLNR) child care providers can only care for two children or one sibling group of any age, that are not related to the care provider by blood or marriage, at any one time.

LNR care providers may or may not have had formal child care training or previous child care experience. Care providers set their own hours of operation, fee schedules and operating policies. Parents are solely responsible for assessing and monitoring the quality of care provided in any unlicensed child care arrangements.

| <i>Additional questions for unlicensed child care providers:</i> | <i>Notes:</i> |
|---|---------------|
| Who else lives in the home, how old are they, and what is their relationship to you? | |
| Is your child/children part of the child care setting? | |
| How do your family members feel about you providing child care in the home? | |
| Will you be present and in charge during all the hours child care is provided? | |
| Who will replace you when you are ill or on vacation? | |
| Do you have first aid training? | |
| Can you provide a written medical reference about your physical, emotional and mental health? | |
| Have criminal record checks been completed on yourself and any one else living in your home who are over the age of 12. | |

Making Your Decision

Once you've visited several child care settings, it's time to consider how each meets your family's needs and values.

- Review the information you gathered and discuss it with family and friends.
- Trust your own initial feelings about the physical environment, the program and the people. If the setting feels right to you, it will probably be good for your child.
- Finally, contact the setting you've selected to confirm your decision and the date your child will start.

Making your child's transition to child care successful

- Talk to your child about the new child care, and let them know about the routine and what they will be doing.
- Tell your child the names of the child care provider/s
- Talk to them about arrangements – who is dropping off and picking them up.
- Arrange a visit to the program and familiarize your child with the program, space and people. Give your child time to play, and potentially have them stay for a short time to give them time to settle.
- Talk to the child care provider/s about your child's likes/dislikes, sleeping and eating habits.
- Tell the child care provider/s if your child had a restless night, isn't feeling well, didn't eat breakfast, and share with them if any changes are happening in the child's life.
- Try to get involve in any special events.
- Discuss regularly with the provider/s your child's progress, and any concerns you have about your child.
- Be punctual when picking up children, call if you must be late, and be prepared to pay a late fee.
- Talk to your child about their day at child care.

Signing an Agreement

Licensed child care facilities – and some licence-not-required care providers – will have a parent information package that includes policy and procedures, and a written child care agreement for you to sign. If they do not, you will need to draw up an agreement – to be signed by both you and the care provider, setting out the terms you have discussed and agreed to.

Important! For the safety and well-being of your child, it is essential that the child care setting maintain accurate and current records and information. These records should include the child's medical history, any known allergies or health concerns, family and emergency contacts, and the names of those authorized to pick up the child.

The child care agreement may include such items as:

- Start date, hours and days of care;
- Child care fees and when they are to be paid and a refund policy;
- Holidays, when the facility is closed;
- Termination of care policy;
- Name and contact information of parents;
- Name and contact information of care provider;
- Name and date of birth of the child/ren;
- What to do if the child is ill;
- Who may pick up the child;
- Arrangements for snacks, meals, and supplies (extra clothes, diapers);
- How the child's behaviour is to be guided; and
- What to do in an emergency, including permission to call a doctor or ambulance.

Monitoring the Child Care Setting

You will want to make sure that the child care setting you have chosen continues to be good. It is very important that you visit the child care setting regularly to see for yourself how your child is doing.

While Health Authorities are responsible for monitoring standards of care within licensed child care settings, they cannot visit these settings as often as parents. And in the case of LNR settings – particularly those not registered with the local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCRR) program, parents may be the only people keeping an eye on their child's care.

Leave yourself time to talk to the care provider both when you drop off and pick up your child. If you have any concerns or questions, talk to the care provider and try to arrive at a solution that works for both of you.

Talk to your child about how the day went and listen to your child's feelings. It will of course take some time for a child to adjust to a new situation, but this should not last long. Be alert for warning signs – such as changes in your child's usual behaviour – that could indicate something is wrong with your child care arrangement.

If you are worried about possible abuse of your child or any child in a child care setting, you must report your fears immediately to your local Ministry for Children and Family Development office, or – if the facility is licensed – to the Medical Health Officer through your local health authority. You can also call the Helpline for Children, toll-free. Dial 310-1234 (no area code needed).

Observe how your child reacts, if your child:

- is unusually fearful of going to the child care facility,
- is anxious to leave,
- has unexplained bruises or other signs of physical abuse, or
- talks about inappropriate actions on the part of adults or other children at the child care setting, you may want to consider making other child care arrangements and notifying the appropriate authorities.

Any concerns that a child has been mistreated can also be reported to the Health Authority Community Care Licensing Program.

Financial Support

Child Care Subsidy

The Child Care Subsidy is a government program that assists eligible low and middle income families with the cost of child care. Payments, called subsidies, are available for both full-day and half-day child care arrangements, in either licensed or unlicensed/licence-not-required child care settings.

You and your spouse (if applicable) may be eligible for a subsidy if you have a low or moderate income and you and are:

- employed or self-employed;
- attending an educational institution or enrolled in distance education;
- seeking employment or participating in an employment-related program (only one parent can be seeking employment);
- have a medical condition that interferes with your ability to care for your child(ren);
- have been referred by a Ministry of Children and Family Development or Delegated Aboriginal Agency social worker; or
- have a child attending a licensed preschool.

Monthly subsidy payments vary depending on your family's circumstances. The exact amount of subsidy depends on your family income, family size, the age of the children and the type of child care you choose.

If you think you may qualify for a child care subsidy, you are encourage to apply as soon as you have found a child care provider. The Child Care Subsidy Program covers the cost of child care up to the maximum amounts listed in the Child Care Subsidy Rate Table. The rate table is posted on the ministry's web site at www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/rates.htm . You will be responsible for paying the difference between the child care subsidy amount and the amount charged by the child care provider.

For more information or to apply for subsidy, contact the Child Care Subsidy Service Centre at **1-888-338-6622** or visit www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/subsidy_promo.htm

Child Care Subsidy Special Needs Supplement

If you have a child with special needs who requires child care and you have been found eligible for child care subsidy, you may be eligible for additional support. (This assistance is in addition to the basic child care subsidy.)

The special needs supplement provides up to \$150 per month towards the cost of the space fee for child care. The total combined amount of the child care subsidy and the special needs supplement cannot exceed the cost of child care.

To find out more, please contact the Child Care Subsidy Service Centre at **1-888-338-6622** or visit www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/subsidy_promo.htm

Universal Child Care Benefit

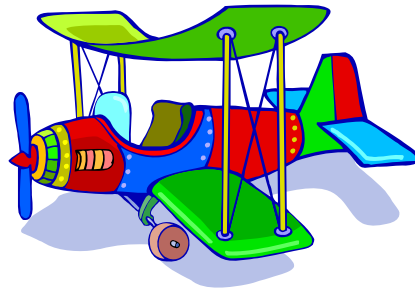
The UCCB is designed to help Canadian families, as they try to balance work and family life, by supporting their child care choices through direct financial support. The UCCB is for children under the age of 6 years and is paid in installments of \$100 per month per child.

For more information please visit www.cra-arc.gc.ca/bnfts/uccb-puge/menu-eng.html.

Supported Child Development Program

If your child has special needs and is attending an inclusive child care program, additional supports may be available through the Supported Child Development Program. These supports may include training, consultation, and/or staffing. Participation in this program is voluntary and is available to all families.

For more information on the Supported Child Development Program or to locate a program in your community visit www.scdp.bc.ca



Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport

Ministry of Children and Family Development
with the assistance of Human Resources Development Canada
Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Original Main entry under title:
Parents' guide to selecting child care

Also available as a video (VHS) recording as an older booklet version
ISBN 0-7726-3736-9

1. Day care centers – British Columbia – Evaluation.
 2. Child care – British Columbia – Evaluation
 - I. British Columbia. Provincial Child Care Facilities Licensing Board
 - II. Westcoast Child Care Resource Centre
 - III. British Columbia. Community Care Facilities Branch
- HD778.7.C32B742 1998 362.71'2'09711 C99-960006-0

Updated September 2009

