

Choosing Quality Matters

Texas Child Care Standards are *minimum* standards/rules that each Licensed and Registered child care provider must follow.

Child care providers can choose to follow higher standards to improve the quality of their program.

Children who attend a quality child care program not only perform better in school, they also gain the social and emotional skills needed to succeed in life.



The **Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)** is a voluntary rating system that uses a rating structure similar to ratings for hotels, movies, and restaurants. The QRIS is designed to give parents a tool to help find quality child care programs. The QRIS is also designed to help child care facilities in Texas increase the quality of care through improvement in program practice.

TEXAS QUALITY RATING AND IMPROVEMENT SYSTEMS:



Texas Rising Star (TRS): In Texas, child care programs can pursue higher quality through several avenues. Texas Rising Star is one of the options for parents looking for high quality child care for their children. It is a voluntary, quality-based child care rating system of child care providers participating in the Texas Workforce Commission's subsidized child care program. TRS Certification is available to Licensed Center and Licensed and Registered Child Care Home providers who meet the certification criteria. The TRS Provider certification system offers three levels of certification (Two-Star, Three-Star, and Four-Star) to encourage providers to attain progressively higher certification requirements leading to a Four-Star level. To learn more visit www.workforcesolutionsrca.com or call 512-260-1937, x4012 or toll free 1-877-223-0404, x4012.

Look for the Texas Rising Star logo or ask your provider if they are a Texas Rising Star!



Texas School Ready! (TSR): The Children's Learning Institute implements the *Texas School Ready!* project as an early education approach that serves at-risk preschool-aged children through shared resources between public and private early childhood education programs. It is designed to increase school readiness through five evidence-driven components: research-based curriculum, technology-driven child progress monitoring, facilitated teacher professional development, ongoing teacher mentoring, and sustainability, including participation in the Texas School Readiness Certification System (SRCS). To learn more visit: <http://texasschoolready.org/> or call 1-713-500-3709.

OVER>>>



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Toll Free 877-223-0404
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NATIONAL ACCREDITED PROVIDER INFORMATION:

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC): www.naeyc.org or 1-800-424-2460.

National Early Childhood Program Accreditation (NECPA): www.necpa.net or 1-855-706-3272.

National Accreditation Commission for Early Care and Education Program (NACCP): www.earlylearningleaders.org or 1-800-537-1118.

Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI): www.acsi.org or 1-719-528-6906.

National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC): <http://nafcc.org> or 1-801-886-2322.

Council on Accreditation (COA): www.coanet.org or 1-212-797-3000.

AdvancED Quality Early Learning Schools (QELS): www.advanc-ed.org or 1-888-413-3669.



Texas Child Care Solutions. Parent information and developmental screenings for your child, visit <http://texaschildcaresolutions.org/>

What Does Quality Child Care Look Like?

Low child/teacher ratios and small group size: Small group sizes ensure children receive one-on-one attention, which is very important to a child's social and emotional development.

Staff with higher education and on-going training: Caregivers trained in Early Childhood Development understand how children grow and learn, and they know how to provide the materials and activities that are best for the ages and interests of the children.

Prior experience and education of the Director: A Director with Child Development training and education, and prior work experience in Early Childhood Education, has the ability to increase the quality of care in the child care programs.

Low teacher turnover: Well-paid teachers with good benefits change jobs less often, lowering teacher turnover and increasing opportunities for children to create attachments and build relationships. It is hard for children if their teachers change frequently. Getting used to a new teacher takes time and energy that could be spent on learning new things.

Positive teacher/child interactions: Children grow and learn when they feel cared about and comfortable. Positive teacher/child interactions help children feel noticed, confident and secure.

Accreditation: Child care providers that are accredited demonstrate an intent to provide high quality care and have met standards that go above and beyond minimum standards.

Age appropriate activities: When the program has knowledge about child development, they can provide a program that is suitable for the age and stage of development for each group of children.

Good health and safety practices: Health and safety training is critical. Well-trained child care providers know how to reduce the risk of illness and injury in their programs.

When families need to use child care, it is important that their children are enrolled in the highest quality care possible. Children who have spent time in high quality child care environments have lasting benefits from the experience. Research indicates that children who receive a high quality early childhood education have better math, language and social skills as they enter school, and as they grow older require less special education, progress further in school, have fewer interactions with the justice system and have higher earnings as adults (Child Care Aware: Barnett, 1995). Child Care Aware: www.childcareaware.org or 1-800-424-2246.

Types of Texas Child Care Providers



As a parent, one of the most important decisions you will make is selecting care for your child.

Licensed Facilities: Provide care for seven or more children under 14 years old for less than 24 hours per day at a location other than the permit holder's home. All types of licensed facilities have published standards they are required to follow and are routinely monitored and inspected. Licensed facilities are inspected at least once every 12 months and to investigate reports alleging violations of standards or child abuse/neglect. Programs that are licensed facilities:

- **Child Care Program:** This is a licensed center that provides care for children under 14 years of age for less than 24 hours a day, but at least two hours a day, three or more days a week.
- **School-age Program:** This is a licensed program that only provides care for school-age children. A school-age program may also operate during school holidays, the summer period, or any other time when school is not in session.

Registered Child Care Homes: Registered Child Care Homes provide care in the caregiver's home for up to six children under age 14; they may also care for six additional school-age children after school hours. The number of children allowed in a home is determined by the ages of the children. No more than 12 children can be in care at any time, including children of the caregiver. Registered homes are inspected every 1-2 years and to investigate reports alleging violations of standards or child abuse/neglect.

Licensed Child Care Homes: Licensed Child Care Homes provide care for less than 24 hours per day for 7-12 children under 14 years old in the permit holder's own home. Licensed facilities are inspected at least once every 12 months and to investigate reports alleging violations of standards or child abuse or neglect.

Listed Family Homes: People who must list with Child Care Licensing are those who are compensated to provide regular child care (at least four hours per day, three or more days a week, for three or more consecutive weeks or four hours a day for 40 or more days in a 12 month period) in their own homes for 1-3 unrelated children. The listed family home caregiver must be at least 18 years old. They are **not inspected** unless a report is received alleging child abuse/neglect, an immediate risk of danger to the health or safety of a child, and/or if providing child care subject to further regulation.

- **Child Care Services (CCS) parents choosing a relative to care for their child.** A relative is an individual who is at least 18 years of age, and is, by marriage, blood relationship or court decree, one of the following: *adult siblings-not living in same household, aunts, uncles, grandparents, and great-grandparents*. The relative **must** become a Listed Family Home with the Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). In addition, the relative must pass a background and criminal history check. To learn more contact DFPS: 512-834-3426 or visit:

http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care/About_Child_Care_Licensing

Texas Child Care Standards

In Texas, licensed and registered child care programs are regulated by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services/Child Care Licensing (DFPS).



TEXAS
Health and Human
Services

Texas Department of Family
and Protective Services

Why does Child Care Licensing regulate programs?

To protect the health, safety, and well-being of children who attend or live in regulated child-care operations and homes. DFPS has developed minimum standards for regulated operations and homes as well as policies and procedures for making sure those minimum standards are followed, based on Chapter 42 of the Human Resources Code.

They also provide technical assistance, training, and consultation to child-care providers, and educate the public on selecting and improving child care services.

Child Care Licensing responsibilities include:

- Regulating all child-care operations and child-placing agencies to protect the health, safety, and well-being of children in care.
- Permitting and monitoring operations and agencies for compliance with state licensing standards, rules and laws.
- Investigating complaints alleging violations of minimum standards and reports of abuse or neglect in daycare and residential childcare operations.
- Informing parents and the public about child care, including how specific daycare and residential childcare operations are complying with minimum standards of care.
- Giving child-care providers technical assistance on meeting licensing standards, rules, and laws.

To learn more about the child care standards or to report a violation:

Visit: http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care/About_Child_Care_Licensing or call 512-834-3426.

In addition to information about child care standards, DFPS also provides parenting resources and information about health and safety requirements and information on:

- The prevention and control of infectious diseases (including immunizations)
- Building and physical premises safety
- Minimum health and safety training appropriate to the provider setting
- The regulatory compliance history of child care providers

OVER>>>

Child Safety Campaigns

DFPS supports several child safety campaigns that can help you keep children safe in a variety of situations.

Visit: http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care/About_Child_Care_Licensing/child_safety_campaigns

Help For Parents. Hope For Kids.

For parenting tips, resource library, and kids activities. Visit <http://www.helpandhope.org>

Visiting Child Care Programs

You do not have to be a child care expert to choose a good child care program. While every child and every child care situation is different, there are some common things to do when looking for care. *Always trust your instincts!*



A Good Place for Learning Has . . .

- **Group Size and Child to Staff Ratios:** Research shows that small group sizes work best. The fewer children in a group, the more attention each child will get from the caregiver. The number of children compared to the number of adults is called the child to staff ratio. *When the group size/ratios are small, caregivers can spend more time with each child in a group.*
- **Training and Education.** Caregivers trained in Early Childhood Development understand how children grow and learn, and they know how to provide the materials and activities that are most appropriate to the ages and interests of the children. *It is important to ask the provider about the education and training of the staff working with children.*
- **Furniture that fits.** Like a good shoe, a chair should fit. Your child should be able to reach sinks and toilets. Shelves and toys should be easy for children to reach.
- **Shelves with lots of toys and that are easy to choose.** The shelves should be well-organized. Boxes with toys should have labels. Neat shelves help your child be more independent and help your child clean up.
- **Equipment that is safe and encourages children to play.** Be sure playgrounds are safe. There should be sand or something soft under the swings and slides. Look around to check that equipment is sturdy and toys are not broken.
- **Books with interesting pictures.** Books help children learn about the world. They also help children to learn words, concepts and ideas and to read and write. They stretch a child's imagination, increase their vocabulary, and improve language skills.
- **A place for quiet play and a place for noisy play.** There should be a place for your child to work quietly at times, a place to relax.
- **Cleanliness, lots of fresh air, and a comfortable temperature.** The rooms need to be clean, especially the kitchen, lunch area, and bathrooms. Also notice whether caregivers wash their hands after diapering, toileting, and wiping children's noses. *It may sound simple, but these practices are important in helping to prevent the spread of illness and infectious diseases.*
- **A private place for each child's belongings.** Each child needs a cubby or storage area. This is where he can hang his coat or keep his blanket and a favorite stuffed animal.
- **Bright colors and cheerful decorations.** Some of the decorations need to be the children's art. Artwork and decorations should be at the *child's* eye level.



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CHILD CARE CHECKLIST

THE CAREGIVER AND CLASSROOM

- Yes** **No** Does the caregiver get down to the children's eye level when talking with the children?
- Yes** **No** Is there enough staff based on the number of children? *Count the number of children and staff. The smaller the group, the more attention your child will receive.*
- Yes** **No** Is the caregiver involved with the children during activities?
- Yes** **No** Does the caregiver sit with the children at snack and/or meal time?
- Yes** **No** Is there enough equipment for all children to play with? Is there enough outside too?
- Yes** **No** Are children kept busy with fun activities?
- Yes** **No** Do the children sound happy and involved?
- Yes** **No** How is the sound level? Is it either too quiet or too noisy/chaotic?
- Yes** **No** Does the caregiver listen closely to each child and use positive language when speaking?
- Yes** **No** Does the daily schedule offer quiet *and* active play, both inside *and* outside?

THINGS TO ASK

- Yes** **No** Is the provider's license posted and available? Where is it posted?
- Yes** **No** Do they post their reports from Child Care Licensing? Where? When was the last time Child Care Licensing visited the program? Were there any violations?
- Yes** **No** Are there smoke alarms and an emergency disaster plan posted? When was their last fire drill?
- Yes** **No** Is the program a Texas Rising Star or Accredited?
- Yes** **No** Does the caregiver have training and experience working with the age group? Are CPR and first aid included in the training?
- Yes** **No** Are meals or snacks provided? Is there an extra fee for meals or snacks?
- Yes** **No** Are the rules about children who are ill? What are the rules? How is prescribed medication handled for the children?
- Yes** **No** Are there medical emergency procedures?
- Yes** **No** Are there rules about behavior issues? What are the rules?
- Yes** **No** What days is the program closed? Do they offer alternative care on closed days?
- Yes** **No** What are the rules about late pick-up? Is there an extra fee?
- Yes** **No** Do the children go on field trips? If so, who drives and what vehicles are used?
- Yes** **No** Do the children spend any time watching television or videos? How much time?
- Yes** **No** Do they accept children with special needs?

THE PARENT'S ROLE

- Yes** **No** Are parents welcome to drop in whenever their children are in their care?
- Yes** **No** Are parents encouraged to participate in activities?

HOW IT FEELS

- Yes** **No** I think my child would enjoy coming here.
- Yes** **No** The environment appears clean and safe for children.
- Yes** **No** I feel comfortable using this program.
- Yes** **No** I have contacted Child Care Licensing to learn if about the program's inspections and possible complaints.

APPROACH WITH CAUTION IF:

Parents are limited to visiting hours and are not encouraged to drop in unannounced.
Caregivers are unwilling or unable to tell you about your child's day.
The caregivers do not act as if they enjoy their work.
Their license is expired or they are not licensed.

Additional Resources



Texas Child Care Solutions. Parent information and developmental screenings for your child, visit <http://texaschildcaresolutions.org/>



2-1-1 Texas/United Way. No matter where you live in Texas, you can dial 2-1-1, or (877) 541-7905, and find information about resources in your community. Whether you need parenting classes, help finding food or housing, child care, crisis counseling or substance abuse treatment, one number is all you need to know. Visit www.211texas.org or call 2-1-1.



Texas Department of Family and Protective Services/Child Care Licensing (DFPS). Regulates and inspects licensed and registered child care programs. They also provide parenting and health and safety resources. Visit www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care or call 512-834-3426



Texas Head Start Association child development programs for Early Head Start (ages newborn-3years) and Head Start (ages 3-5years). Services are available at no cost to qualifying families. Visit www.txhsa.org to find locations in your area.



Pre-Kindergarten programs are offered in many school districts. Children must be at least three years of age and meet other eligibility criteria. Contact your neighborhood school for additional information visit <http://tea.texas.gov/ece/eligibility.aspx> or call 512-463-9581.



On-site after-school care is offered in many schools, for children in pre-kindergarten and older. Sometimes these programs offer scholarships or fees based on your household size and income—also known as sliding scale fees. Contact the school your child attends and ask if after-school care is offered



Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) provides financial help for children and their parents or relatives who are living with them. Monthly cash payments help pay for food, clothing, housing, utilities, furniture, transportation, telephone, laundry, household equipment, medical supplies not paid for by Medicaid and other basic needs. To apply, visit www.yourtexasbenefits.com or call 2-1-1.



The Lone Star Card Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps people buy the food they need for good health. This program **is not** tied to the TANF program. It is considered a nutritional program. To apply, visit www.yourtexasbenefits.com or call 2-1-1.



The Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC) a nutrition program that helps pregnant women, new mothers, and young children (*under 5years of age*) eat well, learn about nutrition, and stay healthy. For a WIC office near you, visit www.dshs.state.tx.us/wichd or call 1-800-942-3678.



Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). Low cost children's health insurance for children from birth to 18 years of age. To apply, visit <https://chipmedicaid.org> or call 2-1-1.



LowIncomeHousing.us

Nationwide Housing Search. Find affordable rentals & housing options for low income families and individuals. To learn more visit www.lowincomehousing.us



If you are a **college student**, check with Student Services to see if they have money to help pay for child care while you attend school.