

Your Guide to Choosing Quality Child Care

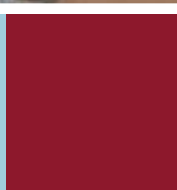
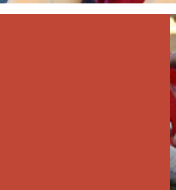
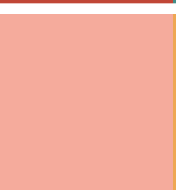
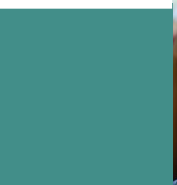
To find a Star provider families can call Children and Families First at 1-800-220-3092.

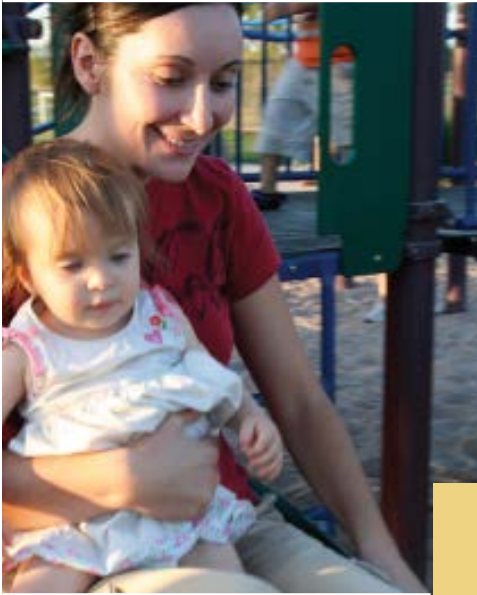
If child care providers are interested in enrolling in Stars they can call or email the University of Delaware, Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC).

DSS Website
<http://intranet.dhss.state.de.us>

ASSIST Website
<http://assist.dhss.state.de.us>

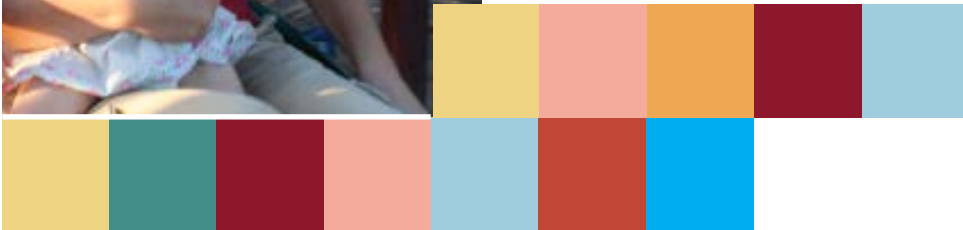
Toll Free DHSS Numbers
1-800-464-4357 or call 211





Finding quality child care, whether you are a single parent or a two-job family, is an important responsibility - one that more and more people are facing every day.

There are many choices to consider and decisions to make along the way.



This booklet helps you follow the “**Check It Out**” approach to finding quality child care. You will find that the information inside is very complete and easy to follow.

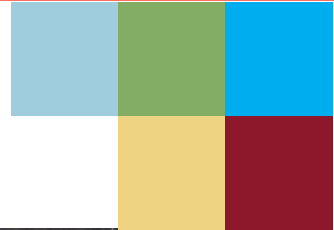


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Getting Started

Finding quality child care starts here... with steps that will help you identify which providers you may want to call.



STEP ONE

Here are some basics on child care settings: Consider the kind of setting you prefer for your child. To help you decide, here are the basic kinds of child care settings you will want to find.



In-Home Settings:

- Family child care for up to six children
- Large family child care for up to 12 children

Center-based Settings

- Child care for more than 13 children

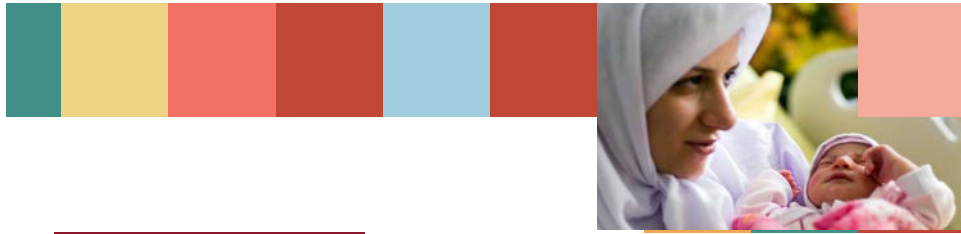
Most child care services are required to be licensed.

If you have any questions, please call the office of Child Care Licensing at 302-892-5800 (New Castle County) or 302-739-5487 (Kent and Sussex Counties.)

List the child care setting you prefer:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____





STEP TWO

Before you pick up the phone, you will want to narrow down this list.

For a list of providers in your area contact Delaware Children and Families First at <http://cffde.org> or 1-800-220-3092, or the Office of Child Care Licensing at <http://kids.delaware.gov/occl/occl.shtml> or 302-892-5800.

You can separate them from the list above and write them here:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____



STEP THREE



is the state's quality rating and improvement program. Look for the Stars – they indicate a commitment to quality child care. See if the program participates in Delaware Stars. The more stars (up to five) the better!

Separate these from the list and write them here. These are the providers you want to call. Now it's time to make those calls!

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____









Key to Know

As you get ready to make your calls, remember this:

You have the right and responsibility to ask questions... and professional providers will welcome your interest and be pleased to tell you what you need to know.

There are important questions you can ask. The answers will give you basic information to help choose which provider(s) to visit with your child.

- 1  I receive child care subsidy from the state.
Do you have any openings? **Yes** **No**
- 2  What days and hours are you open?
Days: _____
Hours: _____
- 3  Do you participate in Delaware Stars for Early Success? If so, what Star Level are you?
(Programs earn up to 5 stars) **Yes** **No**
What Level Star: _____
- 4  If you have children with special needs you will want to ask a third question: Can you meet my child's special needs? **Yes** **No**

If there aren't openings, or if their service isn't available when you need it, or if the provider can't meet any special need your child may have, then you'll want to thank the provider for their time. When you hang up, jot down why you chose not to visit, in case you need to re-look in the future.

Providers that don't meet my needs are:

Reasons why they don't meet my needs:

Making Appointments

You'll want to visit providers who have openings, are open when you need them, and can meet your child's needs. So call each one to make an appointment to visit and **"Check It Out!"**

Place	Date	Time



As you meet with the provider and walk through the home or center setting, remember that Delaware has a way for you to know you are finding a quality program – look for the Stars! Providers in Stars are working to promote valuable education and social experiences for children. Stars providers have well-trained staff who have good communication with families. Stars providers will help your child get a great start in school and in life.

ABOUT THE CAREGIVERS AND CHILDREN

In this section look for “yes” answers in selecting your provider.

	YES	NO
Can the provider show you their license?	___	___
Can the provider show you their Stars Certificate?	___	___
Can the provider tell you the state’s required number of teachers for each room/group of children? (The fewer children per teacher/provider, the better for your child’s learning and development.)	___	___
Are you comfortable with how the children are being treated?	___	___
Can you observe a loving, caring, respectful and nurturing relationship with the children?	___	___
Can you observe that children are getting along with each other?	___	___

ABOUT ACTIVITIES

In this section look for “yes” answers in selecting your provider.

There is a routine/schedule posted which involves age-appropriate: playing, learning activities and snacks.

YES NO

___ ___

ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT

In this section look for “yes” answers in selecting your provider.

There is child-sized equipment indoors and outdoors.

___ ___

The place is organized around activities. (Is the home or center setting orderly and well maintained, even with materials all around?)

___ ___

There is space for naps, as well as play and learning activities.

___ ___

Children have space to store belongings.

___ ___

Activity materials, such as books, toys, and dress-up, are reachable directly by your child.

___ ___

ABOUT HEALTH AND SAFETY

In this section look for “yes” answers in selecting your provider.

The place is clean and sanitary.

___ ___

Are bathrooms and food areas separated and clean?

___ ___

The home or center is safe, as you can see by:

- safety caps on electrical outlets
- heaters covered
- fire escape plan posted
- first aid equipment handy
- outdoor play areas away from danger
- cleaning supplies/medicines out of reach

___ ___

___ ___

___ ___

___ ___

___ ___

___ ___



ABOUT POLICIES

In this section look for “yes” answers in selecting your provider.

	YES	NO
Parents and guardians may visit at any time during operating hours.	___	___
Staff are trained in early childhood and this is a part of the hiring and ongoing process.	___	___
The provider believes in and practices open communications with parents/guardians.	___	___
Policies and procedures include:		
• philosophy of child development and learning	___	___
• approach to curriculum	___	___
• parent-teacher conferences and communicating about your child's development and progress	___	___
• days and hours of operation	___	___
• vacation dates	___	___
• emergency procedures	___	___
• sickness practices	___	___
• fee amount and payment schedule	___	___
• meals and sleeping arrangements	___	___
• drop-off and pick-up policies	___	___
• discipline procedures	___	___
• replacement policy if key person is absent	___	___
• security measures	___	___

GETTING REFERENCES

You can ask for the names of parents to call, or you can talk to them in person when they're dropping off or picking up their children from the home or center.

If it's a licensed facility, you can call the Office of Child Care Licensing at:

**302-892-5800 (New Castle County) or
302-739-5487 (Kent and Sussex Counties).**



OTHER COMMENTS AND THOUGHTS

After your tour, you may have other comments or thoughts. Jot them down here so you can discuss them with the appropriate provider.

REVIEW, DISCUSS, CHOOSE

Once you have all the information you need, take the time to review what you have discovered. Think about it. Talk with your child about where you have visited, if that is helpful. Talk with others whose opinion you trust.

Congratulations!

You are ready to choose the provider that is best for you and your child.



Making an Agreement

Once you make your choice let the DSS Social Worker know so he or she can process the paperwork. Then as you enroll your child, be sure to get a written agreement. The agreement should confirm:

- cost and payment schedule
- how emergencies will be handled
- daily routine and schedule (example: drop-off and pick-up)
- days and hours your child will participate
- expectations of the parent/guardian and the provider



STAY INVOLVED

Quality child care is a shared responsibility. Make the child care experience the best it can be for your child and you by:

- Visiting your child care provider's home or center often
- Talking with the staff and key caregiver
- Talking with your child about his or her experiences each day
- Telling the provider what impresses you
- Discussing any problems with the provider right away



HAVE A BACK-UP PLAN

Emergencies do happen, like when your child is ill. Have a back-up plan to make sure that in any given situation, your child care needs will be met.