



Steps to Finding Care

- ☆ **Call for referrals and records:** Get a list of licensed programs in your area, then check each program's license, ratings, and inspection records online or by phone.
- ☆ **Screen by phone:** Call everyone on your list to see if they have openings. Interview them by phone and narrow your list to the best possibilities.
- ☆ **Visit and ask questions:** Meet the caregivers in person and tour the facility. Read the **inspection records that are required to be posted near the entrance.** Use this brochure as a checklist for more signs of quality.
- ☆ **After enrollment, stay involved:** You and your child's caregiver are partners now. Visiting and participating in events at the program shows both your child and the teachers that you care about what your child is doing and learning!

Your child deserves the safest, most nurturing care available, and you are the best one to choose it!

Find the resources you need:

Oklahoma Department of Human Services
Child Care Services
1-844-834-8314
childcarefind.okdhs.org/childcarefind/

- Search for child care
- Learn more about types of care
- Get information about quality standards and the star rating system
- Find out about financial assistance
- Link to inspection records and monitoring reports
- Link to information about child development, special needs, health and nutrition, and community services

Was this brochure helpful to you? Please send an email and let us know!

EARLY CHILDHOOD COALITION
 eccstillwater@gmail.com
 Stillwater, Oklahoma

The information in this brochure is condensed from OKDHS Publication # 8791, Selecting Quality Child Care: <http://www.okdhs.org/OKDHS%20Publication%20Library/87-91.pdf>



CHOOSING CHILDCARE

Make the best choice for your family!



Nurturing beginnings for a lifetime

When visiting a center, look for these things:

Health and Safety

- ☆ The space is clean, comfortable, free of hazards, well lighted, and smoke-free. Toys and furniture are clean, safe, and in good repair.
- ☆ All children are up-to-date on their immunizations.
- ☆ Children who are sick are separated from the group to prevent the spread of illness. Rules for giving and storing medications are followed.
- ☆ The program has emergency procedures, smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, evacuation plans, regular fire drills, and tornado drills.
- ☆ Nutritious meals are properly prepared and served.
- ☆ Parent permission is required to transport children. Seat belts and safety seats are used.
- ☆ Enough space per child – 35-40 sq. ft/child indoors, 75 sq. ft/child outdoors.
- ☆ Outdoors there is a fenced play area with shade and soft landing material under play equipment.



Quality Matters

- ☆ **Adult-to-Child Ratio:** Count the number of children and the number of caregivers. A small number of children per caregiver is important. Generally, the *maximum* per adult should be 4 babies, 6 toddlers, 8 two-year-olds, 12 threes, or 15 four/fives.
- ☆ **Group Size:** How many children and teachers are in the group? Smaller groups are usually safer and calmer.
- ☆ **Caregiver Training and Turnover:** Caregivers with degrees or special training in working with children will be better able to help your child learn. How long have the current caregivers been there? It's best if children can stay with the same caregiver for at least a year. Caregivers who come and go make it hard on your child and you.
- ☆ **Positive Interactions:** Does the caregiver attend to children's needs and give them lots of attention and encouragement in a warm and friendly way? Caregivers should talk to children at their eye level and listen closely to each child.
- ☆ **Opportunities to Learn:** Is there a daily schedule with planned activities for children as well as lots of time for free play? Do caregivers read to children? Good child care programs offer active play and learning activities every day, indoors and outside.
- ☆ **Family Involvement:** How will caregivers let you know about what went on during your child's day? Good child care programs welcome drop-in visits and parent ideas.



Licensing and Regulation

Oklahoma requires most types of child care to have a license, which sets *minimum* health, safety and caregiver training requirements. The state also requires criminal history checks for caregivers and sets limits on the number of children per caregiver as well as the group size. Licensed programs are inspected three times per year, and must post inspection records for parents to read.

Stars and Accreditation

Licensed centers and homes are rated from one to three stars. Two-and three-star programs have met voluntary standards for child care that are *higher* than basic licensing requirements. Three-star programs are also nationally accredited.

Regardless of the star rating, do your own evaluation. Use quality standards along with knowledge of your child to choose the care that is right for your family. You know your child best!