

About This Type of Care

Some child care centers operate as non-profit and may be owned by an individual, church, public school, or a government agency. Other child care centers may operate as a for-profit and may be owned by an individual or a chain.

Not all child care centers may be required to be licensed. Some examples of center-based programs that may not be required to be licensed include:

- Programs operated by a school
- School-age before and after care programs
- Summer camps
- Faith-based programs, including Parent's Day Out programs
- Part-time programs, including some nursery schools, preschools, and pre-kindergarten programs

It is always important to ask your child care center or check with your local [Child Care Resource and Referral agency](#) to check to see if your provider is required to be licensed. You may also want to check to see if your child care center participates in your state's [Quality Rating and Improvement System](#).

Families choose child care centers for different reasons:

- Child care centers have a classroom-like environment where children are cared for in groups of other children typically their same age.
- Child care centers have more adults present in the building.
- Child care centers offer a variety of activities and opportunities for children.
- Child care centers often have the most regulations and inspections for health and safety standards.

Tips for Choosing This Type of Care

- Ask to see a copy of the program's license and inspection history. These reports provide you valuable information about the provider's health and safety compliance. Click on [Child Care by State Resource](#) to find out more information on licensing and inspection reports in your state.
- Confirm that every adult living, working, or volunteering in the child care center has had a comprehensive background check.
- Ask the provider about the number of adults and children present (staff to child ratios).
- If you are looking for infant care, make sure to ask your provider about their Safe Sleep policies. For more information on questions to ask your child care center provider, [see our Child Care Center Checklist](#).