

Choose quality childcare

Checklist for visiting a childcare program

After narrowing down your childcare options, contact providers to schedule an in-person visit. Visiting the program allows you to assess the environment and confirm that you feel comfortable and confident with the care your child will receive. Try not to rely on first impressions when making your choice.

Use the following checklist to help with your assessment. It covers important questions to ask about:

- health and safety
- nutrition and mealtime
- activities and play materials
- relationships and parent engagement
- infant care
- fees and funding

Health and safety

<input type="checkbox"/> Is the childcare program licensed under the Early Learning and Child Care Act ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Licensed programs are required to post their licence certificate and most recent inspection report in a prominent place in the facility where parents can see it. You can also ask them to confirm if they are licensed under the Act.○ Daycare, preschool, and out-of-school care programs are required to have a licence.○ Family day homes operate under licensed family day home agencies that monitor to ensure they are meeting standards for safety and quality. Approved family day homes can care for up to 6 children, not including their own, and will display a smiling red door logo in a prominent place.○ Unlicensed providers can care for up to 6 children, not including their own. However, the Alberta government does not monitor unlicensed providers or any networks, associations, or organizations that provide support for unlicensed providers.
<input type="checkbox"/> Do the provider, facility staff, family day home educator, and any other adults who will be in the facility or family day home with children have a current criminal record check, including a vulnerable sector search?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ This is especially important if you are choosing unlicensed care. If you are considering an unlicensed provider, we encourage you to visit the home when it is operating.○ Typically, unlicensed providers will welcome parents into their home during operating hours. If this is not a policy of the provider, consider choosing this provider with caution.
<input type="checkbox"/> Are facility staff or the family day home educator trained in early childhood development? What is their experience and certification?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ You can verify early childhood educator certification by using the Early Childhood Educator Lookup Tool.
<input type="checkbox"/> Does the childcare program have up-to-date CPR, first aid training and health and safety plans?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Is the provider connected to any support associations or networks?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Is the facility or family day home and all the equipment (indoor and outdoor) clean and in good condition?	

- Is the outdoor play space fenced in?
- Are there locks on the medicine cabinets?
- Are the stairs secured with gates?
- Are cleaning supplies kept out of reach?
- Was the policy regarding sick children discussed with you? For example, if children have a fever or other symptoms of a communicable disease, are they sent home? How does the program isolate sick children from other children until the parents can pick them up?
- How many children are cared for at one time? How many staff per child are present?
- Is there a hand washing policy?
- Do staff and children wash their hands before and after diapering or toileting?
- Where do children sleep during naptime?
- Does the agency or facility provide any information about past inspections or incidents?
 - Licensed childcare programs are required to post recent inspection reports that outline any non-compliances and the actions required to rectify them.
- For an unlicensed program, has the Alberta government issued any stop orders in the last 24 months? You can check by calling Childcare Connect at [1-844-644-5165](tel:1-844-644-5165) or using the [Unlicensed Child Care Stop Order Lookup Tool](#).

Nutrition and mealtime

- Does the program provide meals and snacks? Is the menu posted?
- Does the menu offer healthy food choices?
- Does food for all children meet the standards in [Canada's Food Guide](#) or [Alberta's Nutritional Food Guidelines for Children and Youth](#) and follow the *Food Safety and Licensed Facility-Based Child Care Review Panel's recommendations*?
- Do facility staff or the family day home educator sit with children during meals?

Activities and play materials

- What type of programming does the facility offer? Examples include [Flight](#) curriculum, Montessori, Reggio, etc.
- Is a schedule posted, and is it followed daily?
- Is there time for both children and facility staff or the family day home educator to pick activities?

- Is there time in the schedule for indoor and outdoor play?
- Are there lots of play areas available for children to explore?
- Is there enough space for children to engage in active play?
- Is there a lot of time to play in these areas each day?
- Are materials and equipment age-appropriate?
- Are the materials and equipment in good condition?
- Are there enough toys for the number of children?

Relationships and parent engagement

- Do facility staff or the family day home educator play with children?
- What can the facility provider or family day home educator tell you about the play, learning, and care activities they will do with your child?
- What is the facility provider or family day home educator's approach to child guidance?
- How does the facility staff or the family day home educator engage with children? Are they warm and caring?
- Do they model appropriate behaviour? Are children and adults respectful to other children and adults?
- Do facility staff or the family day home educator communicate well with parents and guardians?
- Are the rules and expectations for the children simple and clear?
- Has the facility provider or family day home educator explained their childcare contract or agreement with you? (Most childcare programs have policies related to illness, cancellations, payment, etc. and it is important that you clearly understand all of these policies.)
- How are parents encouraged to become involved in their child's care?

For infants

- Are infants held and carried frequently?
- Do facility staff or the family day home educator respond quickly to infants' cries?
- Do facility staff or the family day home educator frequently talk with, sing to, and read to infants?
- Do facility staff or the family day home educator adjust to infants' individual feeding and sleeping schedules?

Fees and funding

- Is the program eligible for affordability funding or subsidy to help reduce parent fees?
 - Parents who choose an ineligible program will not receive a reduction to their child care fees.
- Are all fees clearly explained in writing before enrollment?
- If there are optional services that cost extra, is each service voluntary to opt in to?
 - Call Childcare Connect at [1-844-644-5165](tel:1-844-644-5165) with questions or concerns about a provider's fees.
- Are receipts or invoices provided for payments?
- Is there a clear policy for how and when fees may change?
- Are payment methods and due dates clearly communicated?