

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 <i>Act</i>.○ 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?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the outdoor play space fenced in?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there locks on the medicine cabinets?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are the stairs secured with gates?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are cleaning supplies kept out of reach?
<input type="checkbox"/>	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?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How many children are cared for at one time? How many staff per child are present?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there a hand washing policy?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do staff and children wash their hands before and after diapering or toileting?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Where do children sleep during naptime?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the agency or facility provide any information about past inspections or incidents? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Licensed childcare programs are required to post recent inspection reports that outline any non-compliances and the actions required to rectify them.
<input type="checkbox"/>	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 or using the Unlicensed Child Care Stop Order Lookup Tool .

Nutrition and mealtime

<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the program provide meals and snacks? Is the menu posted?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Does the menu offer healthy food choices?
<input type="checkbox"/>	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 <i>Food Safety and Licensed Facility-Based Child Care Review Panel's recommendations</i> ?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do facility staff or the family day home educator sit with children during meals?

Activities and play materials

<input type="checkbox"/>	What type of programming does the facility offer? Examples include Flight curriculum, Montessori, Reggio, etc.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is a schedule posted, and is it followed daily?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there time for both children and facility staff or the family day home educator to pick activities?

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

Relationships and parent engagement

<input type="checkbox"/>	Do facility staff or the family day home educator play with children?
<input type="checkbox"/>	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?
<input type="checkbox"/>	What is the facility provider or family day home educator's approach to child guidance?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How does the facility staff or the family day home educator engage with children? Are they warm and caring?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do they model appropriate behaviour? Are children and adults respectful to other children and adults?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do facility staff or the family day home educator communicate well with parents and guardians?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are the rules and expectations for the children simple and clear?
<input type="checkbox"/>	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.)
<input type="checkbox"/>	How are parents encouraged to become involved in their child's care?

For infants

<input type="checkbox"/>	Are infants held and carried frequently?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do facility staff or the family day home educator respond quickly to infants' cries?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do facility staff or the family day home educator frequently talk with, sing to, and read to infants?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Do facility staff or the family day home educator adjust to infants' individual feeding and sleeping schedules?

Fees and funding

<input type="checkbox"/>	Is the program eligible for affordability funding or subsidy to help reduce parent fees? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Parents who choose an ineligible program will not receive a reduction to their child care fees.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are all fees clearly explained in writing before enrollment?
<input type="checkbox"/>	If there are optional services that cost extra, is each service voluntary to opt in to? <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Call Childcare Connect at 1-844-644-5165 with questions or concerns about a provider's fees.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are receipts or invoices provided for payments?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there a clear policy for how and when fees may change?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are payment methods and due dates clearly communicated?