Your Guide to Finding Childcare

and everthing in between



Care for kids

CHILDCARE TAKEN CARE OF.

Table of contents

INTRODUCTION 5

GETTING STARTED 9

What Types Of Child Care Are There? 10
What Is High-Quality Child Care? 14
Which Child Care Is Best? 24
What Is The Best Age To Start Child Care? 28
Choosing Child Care For Special Needs Children 32
The Great Waiting Game 38
Working With Children Checks 42

APPROACHES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION 45

The Froebel Approach 46
The Pikler Approach To Optimal Early Childhood Development 50
The Steiner Approach To Early Childhood Education And Care 53
Exploring The Reggio Emilia Approach To Early Childhood Education And Care 57
A Close Look At The Montessori Approach 59
The Mindchamps Approach 64

CHILD CARE CENTRES 71

What Are Child Care Centres? 73
How Do I Choose A Child Care Centre? 82
The Value Of Visiting Child Care Centres 85
Child Care Centre Checklist 86
How To Manage Issues With Your Child Care Service? 95

PRESCHOOL 99

What Is Preschool/Kindergarten/Prep? 101
Transitioning From Preschool To Big School 106

FAMILY DAY CARE 111

An Overview Of Family Day Care 112
Family Day Care Checklist 117

NANNIES, AU PAIRS AND BABYSITTERS 123

What Is A Nanny? 124
What Is An Au Pair? 127
How To Use An Agency To Find A Nanny, Au Pair Or Babysitter? 130
What Are Your Obligations When You Employ A Nanny? 135
Retaining Your Nanny/Au Pair 141

OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS CARE 145

An Overview Of OOSH Care 146
How To Choose The Right OOSH Care Provider? 149
Managing Complaints With Your OOSH Provider 150

CHILD CARE AND WORK 153

Returning To Work – Things To Consider 155
Helping Your Child Adjust To Care 156
Single Parents And Child Care 158
Child Care For People Who Work Non-Standard Hours 163
Successfully Using Grandparents For Child Care 166
What To Do When You Can't Find Child Care? 174

THE COST OF CARE 177

How Much Does Child Care Cost? 178
What is the Child Care Subsidy? 181

GOVERNMENT POLICY AND QUALITY STANDARDS 189

What Is ACECQA? 190
What The National Quality Standards Mean For Families 191
What Qualifications Do Educators Need To Work In The Early Education And Care Sector? 194
Child Care Ratios 198
The National Disability Insurance Scheme 202

KEEPING YOUR CHILD HEALTHY IN CARE 207

No Jab No Play – Child Care And Vaccination 208
Strategies For Keeping Your Child Healthy In Child Care 212
Protecting Your Child's Skin While They Are In Care 217
Child Care And Head Lice 221
Dealing With Severe Allergies 224
Stress Reduction Strategies For Children In Care 227

Helping parents find, and secure, high-quality child care



INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt about it, finding high quality child care is a big challenge for many parents. It's natural to want the best possible care for your child, yet finding the magic balance between quality, cost, location and availability proves elusive for many parents. That's why we wrote this book.

CareforKids.com.au was established in 2003 with the sole purpose of making it quicker and easier for parents to find and secure high-quality child care. This guide is a distillation of all the information and experience we have gained in our many years of operation.

The book is divided into sections to offer resources and support for parents at every stage of their child care search. We have canvassed and described all the available options and developed resources to assist parents assess and choose the best care for their family. You'll also find information on the different approaches to delivering early childhood education and care.

Cost is a huge issue for parents and the system changes quickly and can be tricky to navigate. Our easy to understand section on the Cost of Care, will help you make sense of the subsidies available and how to apply, as well as which services attract which subsidy.

You'll also find information on the National Quality Standards, what they mean for families and how they operate to drive improvements in the delivery of early childhood services. The final section of the guide focuses on strategies for keeping children happy and healthy while they are in care.

It's perfectly natural to want the absolute best for your child and I am confident that this edition of the Child Care Guide Australia will help you achieve this goal. You can also join our online community at CareforKids.com.au for constantly updated information, and to search for high quality care in your area.

Ash Sachdev
CEO
CareforKids.com.au

Care for kids



CHILD CARE CONCIERGE

Personalised care that is unique to you and your family

Finding high quality child care when and where you need it isn't easy. In our experience, securing a spot takes time, energy, plenty of research and a fair amount of luck.

That's why we created Child Care Concierge, an additional service for parents who want to spend more time with their family and less time stuck in front of the computer.

Child Care Concierge is a tailored solution to child care search, offering parents the opportunity to work with our team of consultants to help you source and secure child care.

LEARN MORE





One Getting Started

1 GETTING STARTED

WHAT TYPES OF CHILD CARE ARE THERE?

There is a wide range of early childhood education and care services available to Australian families, and for first time parents the choice can be confusing.

To assist you in understanding the types of child care available we have listed below some of the more commonly used child care options along with a brief description. For detailed information on the differences between these types of care read our article on **which child care is best**.

Child Care Centre or Long Day Care

Care for children under school age, on premises especially built or adapted for early childhood education and care services. Private operators, local councils, community organisations, employers and non-profit organisations may run long day care centres.

Long day care centres provide all-day or part-time care for working families and offer developmental programs within their care programs. Meals are usually provided with some long day care centres providing care for limited numbers of primary school children before and after school, and during school holidays.

To search for long child care centres in your area click here.

Family Day Care

A network of experienced carers and educators who provide care and developmental activities in their own homes for other people's children.

Family day care is primarily for children who have not yet started school, however they also provide care for school children up to 12 years old. Care is flexible and can be tailored to suit each family's needs including care outside normal working hours and, if needed, overnight care.

To search for family day care services in your area click here.



Pre-school/Kindergarten /Prep

Pre-school is a planned educational program for children in the years before a child commences school. Children are usually aged between 3 and 5 years of age. Preschool may take place in a range of settings including a purpose built building, in a community setting, a school, as part of a long day care centre or a mobile or visiting service.

Pre-school generally runs between the hours of 9:00am and 3:00pm similar to school hours although this may vary by State and by service so check with the provider.

The terms kindergarten or prep are also used in some States.

To search for pre-schools in your area click here.

Before/After School Care or Outside School Hours Care

Supervised care and recreation for school-age children:

- Before and after school
- On pupil-free days
- During school holidays (vacation care)

OSHC is usually associated with schools and caters to primary school children. Most OSHC services are operated by community and private organisations. Typical hours for OSHC services are:

Before school	7.00 – 9.00 am
After school	3.00 – 6.00 pm
Vacation	7.00 am – 6.00 pm each week day

To search for OSHC services in your area click here.



Occasional Care Services

Occasional Care Services provide short periods of care for children under school age. Families can access occasional care on either a regular or casual basis for a variety of reasons including, shift or part-time work, respite care, crisis and emergency care, shopping or attending appointments.

Occasional care allows people the flexibility to leave their children in an early childhood learning environment to socialise and interact with other children, while they undertake other tasks. Community organisations, non-profit organisations and local councils may run occasional care centres.

To search for Occasional Care services in your area click here.

In Home Care

A flexible form of child care where care is provided in the child's home by an approved carer. In-home care is available for families who do not use a standard child care service, or where their child care needs cannot be met by an existing service. Families that may be eligible for in-home care include:

- families where the parents or child has an illness/disability
- families in rural or remote areas
- parents working shifts or non-standard hours
- parents who have had a multiple birth (more than two) and/or have more than two children under school age
- breastfeeding mothers working from home

To search for In-Home Care in your area click here.

Nanny

Employed by the family on either a live-in or live-out basis to undertake all tasks related to the care of children. Duties are generally restricted to child care and the domestic tasks related to child care. A nanny may or may not have had any formal training though they

often have a good deal of experience. A nanny's working week ranges from forty to sixty hours.

To search for nannies in your area click here.

Nanny Sharing

A nanny employed by two families to undertake tasks related to the care of children. If you are interested in having a nanny care for your child but are reluctant due to the expense, nanny sharing with another family maybe the solution.

To search for nanny share in your area click here.

Au Pair

A foreign national in Australia for up to a year for cultural exchange purposes and to experience Australian life. Lives as part of the host family and receives a small allowance / salary in exchange for child care and household duties. May or may not have previous child care experience.

To search for au pairs in your area click here.

Mother's Help

A mother's help has little or no previous experience of caring for children. They generally have career aspirations in the field of child care and this is one way of gaining experience while they undertake formal study. A mother's help will assist the parent(s) with child care and housekeeping duties. These duties should be carried out under the supervision of the parent.

To search for Mother's Help in your area click here.

Babysitter

Provides supervisory, custodial care of children on an irregular full time or part-time basis.

To search for babysitters in your area click here.



WHAT IS HIGH-QUALITY CHILD CARE?

Most families looking for child care understand the importance of identifying and securing a spot in a high quality early childhood education and care centre. Although this seems like a no-brainer, if you are a first-time parent with no real experience with child care providers it can be hard to try and figure out what high quality care looks like.

Is it the shiny new purpose built centre with all the latest gadgets? Is it the lovely family day carer down the road? Or is it the well-worn community centre with staff who have been there forever?



Chances are high quality child care can look like any combination of these things and you and your child will be the best judge of what high quality is for your particular family. As a rule of thumb, remember that no matter what type of service you choose, in a high quality setting your child will feel happy, safe and secure and have the opportunity to engage in a wide range of play based learning experiences. As a parent, you should feel comfortable approaching the staff and confident that your child's well-being is a priority.

How do I Identify High-Quality Child Care?

The **National Quality Standards** offer a useful way of measuring a child care service's performance against minimum standards set by the government. All services which have been assessed against the new standard are required to display their rating somewhere that is easily accessible to families, and this is certainly a great starting place.

Having said that, usually the best way to judge a service is to go along and spend some time there. This article, **Choosing High-Quality Child Care**, by Eva Cochran, Mon Cochran and Nancy Torp from Cornell University, College of Human Ecology offers some valuable pointers on what to look out for when you visit a service.

Quality of care is not related to where the care is offered but how it is offered. It is difficult to provide high-quality care in an environment that is dirty, the equipment is in poor repair, toys are scarce, and space is cramped. But poor quality care can be - and too often is - delivered in beautifully designed settings with all the toys and materials your child could wish for.

Defining High-Quality Child Care

Our definition of quality mixes what researchers, child care providers, and other parents have learned together with a solid dose of common sense, drawn from our many years of personal and professional experience in both child development and child care. Searching for the best way to explain the meaning of quality, we found ourselves coming back to four basic words and phrases: caring, tuned in, respectful, and safe and secure.

High Quality Providers are Caring and Tuned In

These two qualities work together. A caring and tuned-in provider is one who:

- Listens to and is aware of the child's communications, both verbal and nonverbal.
- Watches for clues to how the child feels and picks up on those clues as she interacts with the child.
- Attends to the children all the time and does not spend time chatting with other adults.



The tuned-in, caring provider is not afraid to show physical and verbal affection but is not overly effusive. They can simultaneously hold one child in their arms, listen carefully to a second who is tugging at their sleeve with a question, and watch a third struggle to accomplish a task, ready to assist if the child gets too frustrated. This person does not need to say they like children because their feelings are clear. Their warmth is obvious, and they spend most of their time directly interacting with the children.

High Quality Child Care Providers are Respectful

Many adults do not respect young children. They are not particularly interested in children, and this attitude shows in their tendency to ignore children. Unfortunately, some people who work in the child care profession fit into this category.

The traditional assumption has been that all women love children and they all have a natural ability to be good child care providers. Both assumptions are myths. Many women and men who love children do not have the patience or the skills to be great early childhood teachers and educators.

The capacity to listen to very young children and to understand the ideas they are trying to express is central to

1 GETTING STARTED

showing respect for them. Listening and responding sensitively shows real consideration for the feelings and needs of the child. Children feel valued when they receive such undivided attention.

A respectful educator values children's ideas, is considerate of their feelings and demonstrates a high regard for them through their warm and affectionate manner. Teachers and educators who can appreciate children in these ways often show the same respect toward the parents and co-workers they interact with.

High Quality Care Makes Children Feel Safe and Secure

Everyone agrees that safety and security are the foundations of high-quality care. Your child has to be safe (physically) as well as feel safe (emotionally), both with the educator or teacher and in the child care environment.

All rooms must be clean and uncluttered and free of hazards such as uncovered electrical outlets and poisonous chemicals. Furniture, materials, and toys should be age-appropriate. For example, the toys within reach of infants and toddlers, who put everything in their mouths, need to be large enough so that the children cannot choke on them.

The outdoor environment must be inviting and secure, safe, easily accessible, with age-appropriate outdoor equipment and lots of space for running and other large motor activities.

The play area must be enclosed, either by a fence or a natural border. The outdoor space should be designed so that the supervising teacher or educator can observe all the children at all times to be sure they are safe.

Emotional safety is more difficult to evaluate during a short visit. Emotionally safe children dare to explore and try out new things. They are spontaneously affectionate with their educator and each other. If they have done something they were not sure they were allowed to do, they don't hesitate to admit it and accept the consequences. These are ways children show trust and confidence that their educator's or teachers are really concerned about them and will help them through the day in a caring, affectionate fashion.

A good way to ensure the safety and well-being of your child is to make unannounced visits to the service he or she attends. A high-quality service will encourage you to visit unannounced at any time. In addition, you need to tune in to your child's feelings and moods on the way to and from the service so you can be as aware as possible of how emotionally safe your child feels there.



How do I identify a High Quality Educator?

FOR INFANTS

Although the qualifications and experience of child care staff are important for all age groups, they are particularly important for the care of infants. Your infant needs lots of love and attention in order to develop optimally. Consistency and emotional support are essential, along with good physical care and a safe, healthy environment. Before you even visit the infant room for the first time to observe the staff in action, spend some time with the director learning about the educational backgrounds of the staff and how long they have been working there. The director can also tell you whether they have been attending workshops or other continuing education opportunities to keep their skills and knowledge up to date.

Ideally, staff should have a background in early childhood and practical experience in working with young children. Providers who work with infants also need knowledge of infant development, health, and nutrition.

What to look for:

The first thing to look for in an infant care provider is the way they interact with the babies. Do they respect each infant as a unique person, seeming to understand that each baby is different from the others? One infant may need to be held quietly, while another really likes to be bounced around, and a third might not want to be touched much at all.

Do they take time to observe the infants and take their cues from what they see, or do they follow their own adult routines without regard for how the baby is feeling?

Is the educator in tune with the babies' rhythms? For instance, do they listen to a baby vocalising, respond with a sound or a word, and then wait for the baby to coo or chuckle again? Do they interact with

1 GETTING STARTED

the quiet babies as well as those who are noisy and attention seeking?

Educators of infants must spend a lot of time on routine things like feeding, changing nappies, and putting babies to sleep. They should also read to the infants, play games like peek-a-boo and "This Little Piggy", sing, hand toys and receive toys back, and simply hold children in their laps and converse with them (not just talk to them).

The educators should encourage older babies to move around by organising the space so that they can safely pull themselves to their feet and walk around holding on to furniture and larger pieces of equipment. Different toys need to be added as the babies grow older—toys that link cause and effect (like a jack-in-the-box) and small baskets with a few blocks or other items that the children can dump out and then refill.

Mobile infants like push-and-pull toys, balls, and large wooden trucks and cars. A child care service that provides this range of toys is well prepared to promote the optimal development of your child.

When you observe staff in the infant room, you should also look for some basic care routines. Carers should hold the babies and talk softly to them as they give them their bottles. Babies should also be talked to while their nappies are being changed, as they are rocked to sleep (a lullaby or soft humming would be appropriate), and when they are lying on the floor on a blanket, exploring a rattle.

One infant may need to be held quietly, while another really likes to be bounced around



Check that the educator washes their hands and cleans the changing table after each nappy change. High chairs, toys, and other equipment also need to be cleaned and disinfected regularly. Remember, the risk of infection is a significant concern with centre-based care. One way to reduce that risk is through scrupulous hand washing and frequent cleaning.

Plan to set aside at least two hours the first time you visit a centre just to observe the work of the educators who would be responsible for your child.



As they grow and learn, toddlers test everyone and everything.

FOR TODDLERS

An educator of toddlers has to be an exceptional person because the toddler time is such a special period in a child's life. Toddlers want to be "big" and independent, but they easily crumble and fall apart, needing love and comfort.

This is the time of biting and temper tantrums, the age when "mine" and "no" are the two most prominent words in a child's vocabulary. Toddlers have very little control over their emotions and actions.

1 GETTING STARTED

They try very hard to follow your instructions but are often frustrated when they fall short of even their own expectations.

Toddlers are growing rapidly in every way. Their bodies are learning to do many new things, like running, hopping, and throwing. Their language development is amazing. New words are added every day. Yet at the same time, they often cannot find the words they need in an emotional moment.

As they grow and learn, toddlers test everyone and everything. Teachers of toddlers have to know all this, and more, to be good educators. They have to understand and appreciate that every child goes through this stage. They also need to be able to pick their battles because toddlers will constantly test boundaries. The solution is not to respond to every challenge but to guide the child firmly in the right direction, toward increased self-control, competence, and self-sufficiency.

To learn more about the teachers of toddlers in a centre you must watch them at work. It is a good idea to observe an educator for at least two hours, longer if possible. You should ask the director about the educational background and experience of the educators. Ideally, you want them to have both experience and some theoretical knowledge about toddlers.



FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Preschoolers learn through play. Good early childhood professionals understand that children are not "just playing"; play is their 'job' and the way they learn.

Educators are important in this process because they help children get access to the materials and toys that they need for playing and learning. Educators also guide the children when they don't know what to do next, help them resolve interpersonal conflicts, and teach them how to get along with one another.

Preschool teachers should have both a qualification or considerable training in early childhood education and experience working with children this age. This preparation and experience provide educators with a solid understanding of what 3 - 5 year old children are capable of and why they think and behave as they do. The centre director should be able to tell you about the educational

backgrounds of the staff members and how much on-the-job training they have had.

Preschool-aged children should be following a predictable daily routine. A written schedule should be posted in the classroom to orient visitors. This schedule can contain some flexibility, but children this age like the feeling of being able to predict what will happen next. Serving snacks and meals at a regular time and having a regular nap time helps them feel secure in their environment.

What to look for when you observe the staff in action in the preschool room:

How do the educators handle transitions from one activity to another? Children often become frustrated when they are kept waiting for something to happen. An experienced educator anticipates these moments and eases the tension with a song or an activity.

Do the educators sit and work with the children as they explore new activities and try out new skills? Or do they start the children out on projects and then stand back and watch? Adults should actually engage with the children during these activities to give them confidence and ease them through frustrations.

Are the daily routines and activities set up in ways that allow children to make choices? If the room is organised into different activity areas, children should be able to choose among those opportunities during free play time. Having materials and toys stored on shelves that are clearly labelled and easily accessible also helps children choose among various alternatives.

Are educators alert and ready to assist children with personal care routines such as eating, going to the bathroom, and dressing if they show the need for that assistance?

Do you see indications that staff members respect each child's individual needs? Educators should recognise and respond to the unique personalities and particular habits of individual children and should be careful not to play favourites.

Do the educators set appropriate and consistent limits on the children's behaviour? Children and educators can together establish the rules they all need to follow and list them for all to see. The rules should be stated in positive terms (e.g., "We use walking feet inside" or "inside walking!"). "Time out" should be used only if the child needs to calm down and collect themselves. The educator should stay with the child during the time out period, rather than leaving them in a corner by themselves.

1 GETTING STARTED

Are children treated the same way regardless of special needs, social class, sex, racial background, or ethnic origin? Watch to make sure that they are receiving an equal amount of positive, supportive attention from the educators. Is the classroom set up to accommodate children with special needs? Is the staff expecting the same things of girls as they do for boys?

Do the educators/teachers greet the children when they arrive in the morning and then make an effort to integrate them into the play of the children already in the centre? This is a difficult transition for some children who may need special attention from the educator in order to adjust smoothly to the new environment each day.

Watch what happens at snack time and outdoors. Are the teachers actively involved with the children during these times, or do they see these as "time off" periods for themselves?

Good preschool educators are explorers. They delight in "playing along" as the children lead them into worlds of fantasy and imagination. Along the way, they assist the children in finding new props for the plays they are creating. They also offer advice when conflicts occur and ask good open-ended questions that help the children expand on their ideas. Look for these interactions. If you see them, you will know you have found a talented early childhood professional.

Good educators are comfortable expressing warmth and caring toward children. They are not afraid to hold or hug or simply touch the children they work with. Ensuring that this need is met for children who spend a large part of their day in a child care setting is especially important. Of course, certain kinds of touching are inappropriate, but preschool children can be taught what kinds of contact are good and what kinds are not right. Educators should feel comfortable scooping children up in their arms and hugging them. Smiles, soft voices, and caring and encouraging words are also a regular part of the child care environment.

Preschool-aged children should be following a predictable daily routine

WHICH CHILD CARE IS BEST?

Once you understand the different **types of child care** available, you need to decide which option is the best for you and your family.

It is important to compare the pros and cons of the different types of child care, and consider:

- When you need child care e.g. full-time or two days a week
- Where you need child care e.g. at home or near work
- Your budget
- Your child's temperament, interests and needs
- Your values and parenting philosophies e.g. discipline



1 GETTING STARTED

Child care comparison table

The table below summarises the main advantages and disadvantages of different types of child care.

Type of child care	Advantages	Disadvantages
Nanny	• Individual attention for your child. One-on-one care is especially important for children under one. • Consistent care from one person. • Generally a professional child carer, with relevant qualifications. • Hours are flexible, depending on your contract agreement. • Child stays in own home and familiar environment. Routines do not have to change. No need to travel and less exposure to illness. • You can have more say in child care as nanny is your direct employee. • Some nannies do light housework.	• Can be expensive compared with other child care if you have one child. • Child may miss out on daily social interactions if there are no regular play dates and outings. • You will need to arrange back-up care if the nanny is ill, takes holidays or leaves. • If you employ a nanny directly, rather than use an agency, you will be responsible for wages, tax, superannuation etc. Read about your obligations for employing a nanny. • You may feel you lose some privacy and space with a live-in nanny sharing your home.
Nanny sharing	• You have the benefits of a nanny but with lower costs. • You only pay for the time you need the nanny. • If the nanny is caring for children from two families simultaneously, they may form strong friendships. • Administration and paperwork can be shared with the other family.	• It can take time and effort to find a compatible family to share a nanny with. • You will need to co-ordinate holidays and any changes in schedule with the other family. • Disagreements between the nanny and one family may affect the other family.

Type of child care	Advantages	Disadvantages
Au pair	• Exposes the family to another culture and language. • A cheaper option than a full-time nanny. • Individual attention for your child. • Child stays in own home and familiar environment. Routines do not have to change. No need to travel and less exposure to illness. • Au pair is living with the family, so can be flexible to fit in routines and special needs (e.g.: holidays).	• Consistency of care can be an issue. (NB: Au pairs on a Working Holiday visa are restricted to 12 months' work with one employer.) • Generally young and living away from home, so will need some personal guidance and advice. • May not be interested in child care as a career option, and may have little experience. • You may feel you lose some privacy and space with another person sharing your home. • If you employ an au pair directly, rather than use an agency, you will be responsible for wages, tax, superannuation etc.
Mother's help	• Can help with housework as well as child care. • A cheaper option than a full-time nanny. • Individual attention for your child. • Child stays in own home and familiar environment. Routines do not have to change. No need to travel and less exposure to illness.	• Not qualified or newly qualified so may not have much experience. • Initially, should not be left unsupervised until they are comfortable with the child and their duties.
Long day care (child care centre)	• For a single child, it is usually cheaper than hiring a nanny. • Care is always available during opening hours. The centre will manage replacement staff if any carer is ill or unavailable. • Provides a structured program with routine and activities. • Centres are licensed facilities, and all staff will have relevant experience and qualifications. • Child meets a range of other children and educators.	• Less individual attention than nanny or au pair. • Child is exposed to more people and more illnesses. • Child may find it hard to settle in to unfamiliar environment. • Many centres have long waiting lists and fees can be expensive. • May not be flexible enough to suit your child's individual temperament and needs. • You will have to arrange travel to and from the centre.

1 GETTING STARTED

Type of child care	Advantages	Disadvantages
Family day care	• A more affordable child care option. • A safe, home environment with consistent care. • Most educators have had children of their own. • Interaction with a small group of children of varying ages. • Can be arranged to fit in to your schedule.	• You will need to arrange back-up care if the educator is ill or unavailable. • There is not the same range of toys, equipment and activities as at a child care centre. • You will have to arrange travel to and from the educator's home.
In Home Care	• Flexible early childhood education and care for families unable to access mainstream child care because they: - Work non-standard or variable hours - Are geographically isolated, or - Have challenging and complex needs. • Provided at home. Routines do not have to change. No need to travel and less exposure to illness. • A tailored, individual education program for each child. • Up to five children from the same family can be cared for by a qualified educator. • Attracts the Child Care Subsidy.	• Strict eligibility criteria. • Limited places. The In Home Care program is capped at 3,200 places. • Child may miss out on daily social interactions if there are no regular play dates and outings.
Babysitter	• Flexible child care, especially for short periods over evenings and weekends. • Child stays in home environment. • Gives parents a chance to take a break without a long-term child care commitment.	• Child care experience varies and babysitters are not always qualified. • May not be available for regular long-term care or longer hours.

Choosing a carer or child care centre

After you decide on the type of child care you want, you will need to choose a carer or child care centre. Use our online **child care search** to find child care in your State or Territory.

We have developed a series of checklists and guides to help you choose a carer or centre:

- **Child care centre checklist**
- **Family day care checklist**
- **Parent guide for interviewing a nanny or au pair**
- **Babysitter checklist**

Whatever type of child care you choose, don't forget that your child and your circumstances will change. What suits you now may not suit you in the future, so be aware of all the options available.



WHAT IS THE BEST AGE TO START CHILD CARE?

Parents thinking about child care will be well aware of all the decisions that need to be made along the way. This website provides information on all the **care options** available and the **pros and cons** of each type of care. It can even help you source a child care provider, however, you will also need to think about the best time to place your child in care and what sort of care will best suit your child as she or he grows older.

Some people say that in-home care is best for babies, and child care centres are best for toddlers. Other people say that family day care is the ideal compromise between home based care and centres and is suitable for children of all ages. Like all the decisions you make about child care, your decision concerning timing should depend on your unique circumstances and the needs of your child.

1 GETTING STARTED

To help you make the right decision concerning the timing of child care for your family keep the following points in mind:

BABIES - 0 TO 18 MONTHS

Babies thrive in situations where they have a lot of one-on-one attention from a single caregiver and home-based care is great at this stage. However, child care centres can work well if there are a small number of babies per carer allowing the carer to respond quickly to the babies needs.

Continuity of care is the most important aspect at this stage. Babies need time to develop an attachment to and trust in their carer. Babies also need a clean and safe environment as they start to explore the world around them.

TODDLER - 18 MONTHS TO 3 YEARS

Babies and young toddlers have similar needs when it comes to child care. Toddlers respond well to low carer to child ratios and require carers with lots of patience and energy. This is when children begin to test their limits and they need carers who can help them understand the parameters of the world they live in.

Toddlers are extremely active and need a safe environment that allows them to explore while limiting the potential for bumps and bruises. Home based care, such as nannies and au pairs are excellent for children at this age. Child care centres and family day care with low carer to child ratios and good staff retention can work well too.

Another benefit of centre and family day care for children at this age is that they offer toddlers a chance to socialise with other youngsters and offer them the opportunity to participate in activities they might not be able to do at home.

PRESCHOOLERS - 3 TO 5 YEARS

The advantage of putting preschoolers in centre based care is that it gives them an opportunity to practice their language and learn social skills.

Three to five year old children are keen to build peer relationships and play with their friends. A quality child care centre can be very beneficial in helping children at this age learn many early skills and provide children with the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of activities they might not be able to do at home.

Home based care is also great for preschoolers, provided they have access to age-appropriate resources and games and have frequent contact with other children their age. An in-home carer can supplement care with community activities at a local library or park, play groups, or other group activities like swimming lessons.



When is best?

Choosing the best time to participate in group activities or put your child in care will depend on their personality as well as your family's work schedule. There is no perfect age and each child will adjust to the care environment in a different way.

You know your child's personality better than anyone else – consider the following questions as you go about choosing when to put your child in care:

- Is your child confident with new people and quick to make new friends?
- Does he or she adjust well to new and/or unfamiliar environments?
- Is your child easily overwhelmed by noise and activity?
- Is your child a physically active little person who wants to take part in everything or more of an observer?

When thinking about care for children under five think about group size and the level of stimulation. Ideally, the younger the child the smaller the group should be, so that noise and activity levels can be moderated.

1 GETTING STARTED

Think about the consistency of the group – if your child's care environment is comprised of carers and children who are the same week after week, it will enable your child to develop lasting friendships and relationships and a comfortable foundation for personal development. Children in less stable care environments spend more time meeting new people than they do building lasting relationships.

Even if you are a full-time stay at home parent, it can be helpful for children to gain experience in a group care environment before they start school so they are comfortable being looked after by adults other than their parents.

Remember that there is no such thing as the perfect age to put your child in care as it varies for everyone. Try and relax into your decision and your positive approach will have a great effect on your child.



It can be helpful for children to gain experience in a group care environment before they start school

1 GETTING STARTED

CHOOSING CHILD CARE FOR SPECIAL NEEDS CHILDREN

Looking for child care is a challenging task. Limited availability combined with a parent's natural desire to secure the best possible care for their little one make it tricky at the best of times. For parents of children with special needs the search for quality child care is even more complicated.

In Australia, children with additional needs have access to the full range of child care providers, including nannies, babysitters, family day care, private and community based long day care, outside school hours care, occasional care and In Home Care. For general information about these services **click here**.

However, children with additional needs require additional care and guaranteeing these requirements are met is an additional concern for parents.

Managing your expectations

Therefore, before starting the search for child care it might be worth considering exactly what you hope to achieve from the service; are you simply looking for a place for your special needs child to socialise and be supervised, or for specialised education services? Do you want the carer to be trained in special needs education or are you happy to instruct the carer about your child's requirements? Are you happy for your child to participate in a generalised child care program or would you prefer a more tailored approach?

Having a clear idea about your expectations and discussing them with the child care providers you visit will quickly help narrow your search.

Once you start the process of contacting and visiting child care providers use our handy checklists to help you cover all the general questions.

- Child care centre checklist
- Family day care checklist
- Parent guide for interviewing a nanny or au pair
- Babysitter checklist

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)

This Federal scheme provides supports for families of children with disability or developmental delay. To learn more about the NDIS, and its Early Childhood Approach, **click here**.



To ensure your special needs child is looked after you might also like to consider the following questions and discuss them with the providers you contact:

- What is the carer's attitude to people with disabilities in general?
- What is the carer's attitude towards your child and their special needs?
- Does the carer look after any other special needs children or have they in the past?
- Does the carer seem comfortable or nervous discussing your child's special needs?
- Does the carer seem interested in your child and their development?
- Is there anyone on staff specifically trained to care for special needs children?
- Is there additional and/or tailored programming for children with special needs? Can you participate in the development of this program?
- Does the carer seem welcoming and friendly or do you sense some hesitancy in their treatment of your child?
- Do you like the way the carer interacts with your child on your visit and does your child respond well to their attention?
- How would the centre handle your child's eating, sleeping and toileting needs?
- Can your child be included in established routines with minimal disruption?
- Does the carer seem keen to involve you in the program?
- Do you think you would feel comfortable talking to the carers about any concerns you or your child were having?
- Would the carer be willing to work with and accept advice from any other professionals you and your child are involved with?
- What is the carer's protocol for contacting these professionals?
- At the end of the visit does the carer encourage you to contact them if you have additional questions or concerns?

1 GETTING STARTED

Remember all the services you contact will have a different approach to caring for special needs children and you should keep this in mind when you contact them. It is not necessary to give each service all the details pertaining to your child's specific condition, but make sure you provide enough information for the provider to discuss program and child care options.

Withholding information about your child's needs is not advisable as it may mean your child is accepted in to a service which cannot adequately provide for them. By providing an honest and realistic picture of your child's needs you will help to ensure they receive the child care they require.



Your child's needs

Once you have narrowed your search to the final one or two centres, provide them with the information they will need to understand and care for your child.

This list should be as comprehensive as possible, as the more information the carer has the happier your child is likely to be. You might like to use the following list as a starting point, tell the providers:

- What activities your child enjoys and does well
- What activities your child finds difficult or frustrating and what help or encouragement they might need to get through these tasks
- How your child lets you know what he or she wants or needs, describe the sounds, words, cries, gestures your child uses to convey this information
- How mobile your child is and how he or she gets around. Describe any mobility aids and how they are used.
- Whether your child is on a special diet and what help they need, if any, to feed
- What medications your child is on, how often they are taken and any possible side effects
- What other equipment your child uses, for example a monitor or respirator
- Whether your child is toilet trained and the toileting procedure you use at home
- How your child interacts with other children and how he or she reacts to new or different adults
- What other agencies, professionals or support programs are providing services to your child
- Any other special needs your child has

The carer's responses to this information should help finalise your decision about which service to go with.



1 GETTING STARTED

Settling in

Remember that choosing your provider is simply the start of a relationship that will last as long as your child is in care. Expect a period of adjustment as you and your child become familiar with the new arrangements and try to maintain a positive attitude through any tricky patches which arise in the first few weeks.

Discuss any concerns with the carer as soon as they come up, and pay attention to your child's behaviour in the first weeks. There is always a possibility that the arrangement may not work, for example if the carer had an unrealistic idea of how well they could meet your child's needs. If you are unable to resolve your concerns, after discussing them with your carer, start the process of sourcing a new provider.

Remember that the adjustment period for each child will be different. Keep talking to your child about the arrangement and keep the carer informed about any changes to your child's needs. Constant communication between you, your child and the carer should help create a nurturing environment which fosters the development of your child.

The Inclusion Support Program

The government offers early childhood education and care providers support to make it easier for child care services to include children with additional needs and look after them once they are in care under an initiative called the Inclusion Support Program (ISP).

The stated goal of the ISP is to promote and maintain high quality, inclusive education and care, for all children, including those with ongoing high support needs, in early childhood education and care settings.

For more information about the ISP and how it operates please **click here**.



THE GREAT WAITING GAME

Chances are, if you know about child care then you know about wait lists, they go hand in hand. Successfully navigating your way through the world of wait lists takes patience, planning and nerves of steel, but you can do it!

The best way to ensure you find the care you need is to start looking early and take a proactive approach to securing your child a spot. Although it may sound a little extreme, pregnancy is a great time to start.

1 GETTING STARTED

First steps

Research, research, research! Use online child care resources such as **CareforKids.com.au** to learn about the **different types of child care** services available, the services in your area, what they offer, whether they have vacancies and what their wait list policy is. You may want to **visit the services** and/or talk to the director of the places you are most interested in.

Once you have a feel for what is on offer and what you like, develop a short list of services you want to wait list with. Remember, wait listing your child at a service does not mean you have to go to that service, but if you know you want a spot for your child when they hit a certain age, then it is crucial to have your name on as many lists as possible to increase the likelihood of securing a spot.

Some councils and large child care providers offer centralised wait lists, some services use online application, while others will require you to go in and pick up a form and leave it with them.

It's common practice for child care services to charge a wait list fee with no guarantee of a spot. Parents have told us they have paid up to $100 to be put on a service wait list. While you won't have to pay that much in the majority of places, you should expect to pay something to cover the costs associated with administering the wait list process.

Many parents have complained to us that once they have put their names on a wait list and paid their fee there is no further communication from the centre. If you don't like this way of operating, take things into your own hands and maintain communication with the centres you have listed with, especially your top two or three.

Be systematic in your approach to managing your wait list applications, try and keep diary notes when you call the service, remember the name of the person you talk to and if possible consider popping in to the service to see the staff on a regular basis.

Successfully navigating your way through the world of wait lists takes patience

1 GETTING STARTED

Remember to maintain a positive an upbeat demeanour in your approach to dealing with the wait list administrators as they are unlikely to help you if you are pushy or rude!

Unfortunately, it is not common practice for a child care service to cap the number of people on their wait lists and most will accept anyone who fills in the application form and pays the fee.

The CEO of KU Children's Services, one of NSW's largest community child care service providers, Ms Christine Legg, says providers do not cap their wait lists as most parents list with more than one service and the wait lists are an unreliable indication of who is likely to actually need a spot.

"We don't usually close off our wait list, however in areas of high need where we do have long wait lists, we inform families if they are unlikely to gain a place for their child at the time they indicate they will need it. In this situation families can choose to stay on the wait list and put their child's name on other wait lists," said Ms Legg.

Tips

Start your planning early, putting your child's name on a wait list at least 12 months before you need care. This will maximise your chances of securing a spot where you want it and when you need it.

If you know you definitely need a spot for your child by a certain age or date then ensure you are on multiple wait lists.

Call the centres you are listed with at least once every month to touch base and keep your details updated.

If you go away for an extended period of time, leave alternative contact details as you may be contacted by phone if a vacancy comes up and miss your opportunity to take the spot.

Enrol your kids in the same service; siblings get priority on the wait list in most centres.

Be flexible in your approach; accept care earlier or on different days to what you planned as once you are in a service you will have opportunities to change your days.

Stay on the wait list at your first-choice service even if you accept a spot elsewhere. Once you have paid your wait list fee you don't have to renew it.

1 GETTING STARTED



Important

Please thoroughly check the small print on any wait list fee you pay, especially if it is a significant amount. Consider the cost against the likelihood of securing a place and find out whether the fee is refundable if you are unsuccessful or find a space somewhere else.

Make sure the waitlist fee request is made in writing and documented and that you have a receipt.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN CHECKS

Making the decision to put your child in a child care can be a stressful time. As well as the distress of having to leave your little one all day, you may worry about them getting ill, feeling lonely or one of a hundred other concerns experienced by parents facing the prospect of leaving their child in a centre or with a nanny, au pair or babysitter for the first time.

Knowing you are leaving your child safe in the hands of qualified professionals should help ease your concerns. Working with children checks are now mandatory in most States and Territories in Australia, and these checks provide a safer environment for children in early childhood education and care services.

Refer to the following for an overview of the checks available in each State or Territory and to find out which agency oversees the checking process.

Remember that child care workers need to fulfil the checking and clearance requirements of the State or Territory they are working in as there are no checks required on a national basis.

State/Territory Legal Requirements

Australian Capital Territory

In the Australian Capital Territory the Working with Vulnerable People Act requires those working with children (and other vulnerable groups) to complete a background check and be registered before they can commence employment.

For more information click here.

New South Wales

The New South Wales Office of the Children's Guardian is responsible for conducting Working With Children Checks to determine whether a person is suitable to work in child related employment.

A Working With Children Check is mandatory for anyone who works with kids and involves a national criminal history check and a review of findings of workplace misconduct.

A person who successfully passes a Working With Children Check receives clearance to work with children for five



years, or a bar from working with children. People who pass are also subject to ongoing monitoring and any new records may lead to the clearance being revoked.

The check is portable which means people who are cleared can work in any paid or unpaid child related work in NSW as long as they remain cleared.

For more information click here.

Northern Territory

In the Northern Territory it is mandatory for people who have contact or potential contact with children to hold a Working with Children Clearance Notice and an Ochre Card.

SAFE NT administers the clearance procedure, which involves an employment and criminal history check. People who have previously had a Criminal History Check to work with children are still required to apply for the **Working with Children Clearance**.

Queensland

In Queensland people working or volunteering with children need to hold a Blue Card.

The purpose of the blue card system is to contribute to the creation of safe and supportive environments for children and young people when receiving services and participating in activities which are essential to their development and wellbeing, such as child care, education, sport, and cultural activities.

For more information on how the Blue Card works in QLD click here.

1 GETTING STARTED

South Australia

Under the Children's Protection Act people in South Australia who work in jobs which require regular contact with children are required to obtain child related employment screening.

For more information on the screening and background checks required click here.

Tasmania

Under laws which took effect in Tasmania in 2014, people who work in the early childhood sector are now required to apply for a **Working with Children Registration** before they start working in an early childhood setting.

Victoria

The Victorian Government has introduced the **Working with Children Check**, which is compulsory for people who wish to work with or volunteer with children.

The check seeks to protect children from harm by requiring people to undertake a criminal history check before they start work in an organisation.

Western Australia

In Western Australia a **Working with Children Check** is compulsory for people who carry out child-related work in Western Australia.

The check aims to protect children by deterring people from working with children when they have criminal records that indicate they may harm children; and by preventing people with such records from gaining positions of trust in paid and voluntary work with children.

Remember that many organisations have internal policies which require employees to undergo background checks as it protects both the children and the organisation from future problems. It is worth asking about these checking policies and procedures when you start hunting for a child care centre for your child or with the agency you have engaged.



Two

APPROACHES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD

2 APPROACHES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD

THE FROEBEL APPROACH

In many ways, the modern kindergarten (in early childhood rather than primary school) owes its existence to German educator Friedrich Froebel. In 1837, when few others were engaged in educating pre-school aged children, Froebel created a program for young children based on 'play and activity' and 'the nurturing of creativity' to help children develop and grow.

Froebel was the first to recognise that children experience significant brain development in their first three years of life and his kindergartens (children's gardens) were based on the philosophy that humans are essentially creative beings that need to be given the opportunity to experience, learn and develop on their own terms and in their own timeframe.

"Children are like tiny flowers; they are varied and need care, but each is beautiful alone and glorious when seen in a community of peers,"

is a famous quote which captures Froebel's views.

Froebel's approach, methods and thinking influenced and inspired many of the more well known early childhood education advocates including Maria Montessori and Rudolf Steiner.

Froebel believed that young children possess unique capabilities and needs, and that adults should serve as the "gardeners" of children's potential. Froebel asserted that young children learn best in settings that provide a stimulating and prepared environment where they can explore and learn from their own experiences and perspectives.

Because Froebel believed that a child's education begins in infancy he saw mothers as the best first teachers and women as the most appropriate teachers for his kindergartens. As such, Froebel kindergartens offered women a career option outside the home in a time when there weren't many options available.

Froebel created a program for young children based on 'play and activity' and the 'nurturing of creativity'.



Key Features of the Froebel approach to education

Froebel education stresses that parents are the first educators for children, and that there should be close links between home and school. The main goal of a Froebel education is to teach the whole child in all developmental areas: socially, academically, emotionally, physically and spiritually.

There are four main components of the Froebellian Approach: motor expression, social participation, free self-expression and creativity.

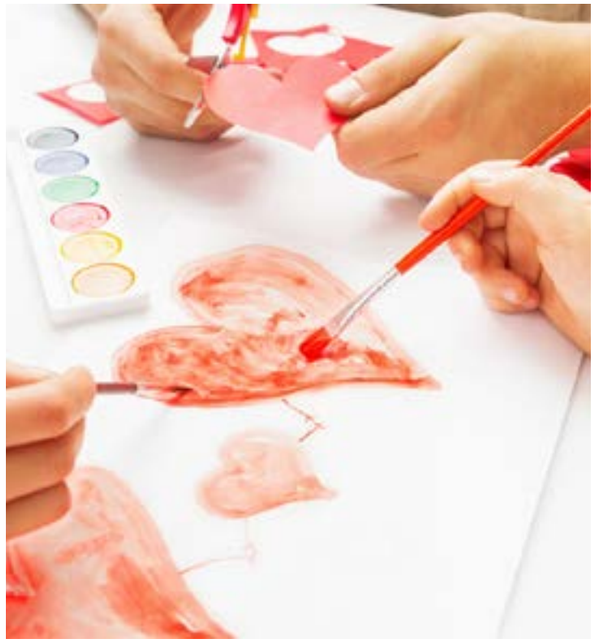
THE FROEBEL APPROACH STRESSES THAT:

Play Drives Learning

Play meets the biological need to discover how things work. Froebel education believes that play is purposeful and not idle, and that meaning is created through hands-on play activities.

Children can only learn what they are ready for

Children develop differently and should be allowed to learn at their own developmental pace.



The teacher should serve as a guide

Teachers should not be viewed as the keepers of knowledge, but instead as guides who can help lead a child to understanding.

The classroom should be a prepared environment

Although Froebellian classrooms may look like they are designed for free play, they are very carefully prepared, presenting children with the tools and materials that are optimal for their level of development.

Movement is imperative for young learners

Froebellian classrooms are alive with finger plays, songs, and all forms of movement.

A unique component of a Froebel classroom is the use of the materials referred to as the Froebel Gifts and Occupations.

The Gifts are a series of sets made of specially designed materials with a fixed form, which provide hands-on explorations of solids, surfaces, lines, rings and points. The sets are comprised of blocks and balls which can be manipulated and stacked in open ended play to help children explore principles of movement, math, and construction.

The Occupations are a set of activities designed to provide further hands-on explorations and practice with skills like clay work, woodwork, lacing, weaving, drawing, and cutting. Again, these materials are designed to allow children uninterrupted periods of play where they construct their own meaning of how things work.

2 APPROACHES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD

Another inherent aspect of the Froebellian approach is the study and appreciation of plants and nature. Froebel thought it was important for children to grow up with an understanding of the importance of the natural environment and to experience nature in its many forms.

The Froebel Trust, a not for profit organisation in the UK committed to keeping Froebel's philosophies alive, summarises the key Froebellian principles education and care providers of children aged zero-eight need to keep in mind to maximise development and wellbeing:

- The integrity of childhood in its own right
- The relationship of every child to family, community and to nature, culture and society
- The uniqueness of every child's capacity and potential
- The holistic nature and development of every child
- The role of play and creativity as central integrating elements in development and learning
- The right of children to protection from harm or abuse and to the promotion of their overall wellbeing.

References and further reading

Froebelgifts.com

Spielgaben.com Comparison among Froebel, Montessori, Reggio Emilia and Waldorf-Steiner Methods – Part 1

Froebelweb

The Froebel Trust



2 APPROACHES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD

THE PIKLER APPROACH TO OPTIMAL EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Most early childhood education and care providers have heard of the Montessori approach to early learning, many will also be familiar with the Reggio Emilia philosophy and Magda Gerber's views. However, I'll take a punt and say there are fewer of you who have heard of Emmi Pikler's teachings.

Dr Emmi Pikler was a paediatrician who lived and worked in Hungary. In 1946 she assumed responsibility for running a Home for Children (known as Loczy in Hungarian) in Budapest and this experience led to the development of her views on how best to nurture infants.

Dr Pikler mentored Magda Gerber, which is how many of her philosophies gained traction in the USA. Much of Dr Pikler's approach makes sense with what we now know about early childhood development, but what makes her teaching extraordinary is the time and context when she was working, when there was a more limited understanding about how carers and parents can best support a baby's growth and development.

After observing and caring for the children in the orphanage she ran, Dr Pikler determined that babies and children need certain conditions to be in place to enhance their physical and intellectual education and development and these led to the development of her 7 Key Principles.

1. Full attention - especially when involved in caring activity times

Dr Pikler's approach advocates that carers and parents should avoid multi-tasking and turn all their attention to their baby when engaging in an explicit caring activity. Dr Pikler said that babies interpret this attention as love and that it brings stillness and focus to lives which may have been overcome with the need to be more productive.

2. Slow down

Dr Pikler observed that babies do better when they are in calm, slow environments. She says babies become over-stimulated and fretful when caregivers are stressed and jump through caring tasks quickly and suggests carers

aim to create an atmosphere of peace to ensure the baby feels respected and doesn't become upset.

3. Build trust and work on your relationship during caring activities

Further to the principle above about slowing down Dr Pikler claims taking time when participating in caring activities, such as nappy changes, bathing and dressing, offers a valuable opportunity for a baby to bond with a carer, and that babies will often become an active partner in these activities when the conditions are optimal. Dr Pikler observed that babies given security and freedom during caring activities will learn what they need to do and will become competent and cooperative partners.

4. 'With', and not 'To'

Dr Pikler viewed babies as active participants rather than passive recipients of care and encouraged carers to take a cooperative approach in all their interactions with babies. She said an important component in this is talking to babies every step of the way so they know what is about to happen and are given the option to help. Patience on the part of the carer is also required to ensure babies have the time to respond.

Dr Pikler observed that babies do better when they are in calm, slow environments



5. Babies should not be put in a position they couldn't put themselves in

Dr Pikler was a strong advocate of the free movement of babies and claimed that propping a child into a position they couldn't achieve on their own or that they couldn't get out of, was tantamount to trapping them. She said free movement gives babies the opportunity to learn through experimentation and teaches them how to overcome challenges and derive a sense of satisfaction and achievement.

Further to this, Dr Pikler was opposed to baby equipment such as hammocks, swings, prams and walkers, which she claimed were more about convenience for the carer rather than in the best interests of a baby's development.

6. Babies need uninterrupted play time

Dr Pikler's approach asserts that babies in a nurturing environment given space, time and the physical capacity to explore are fully capable of entertaining themselves. She said that offering babies uninterrupted opportunities to explore and learn about their world helped them develop confidence and self esteem and that this process helps them learn who they are and develop a sense of being.

7. Carers should tune-in respectfully

Dr Pikler said carers need to be more responsive and respectful of a child's physical and verbal cues to ensure the development of a culture of mutual respect. She said that when carers ignore the explicit messages given to us by children it increases the likelihood they will ignore the messages and requests made to them by carers in later life.

References and more information

Pikler.org

The Pikler Collection



2 APPROACHES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD

THE STEINER APPROACH TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

The Waldorf or Steiner approach to early childhood education is based on the teachings of Rudolf Steiner, an Austrian philosopher who attempted to find a link between science and spirituality and who founded **anthroposophy.**

The first school based on Steiner's thinking was opened in 1919 in the Waldorf-Astoria Cigarette factory in Stuttgart to provide an education to the children of employees. The name Waldorf has stuck and now both names refer equally to schools and early childhood services which adopt the Steiner approach.

According to the International Association for Steiner/Waldorf Early Childhood Education there are currently close to 2000 early childhood services located in 75 countries worldwide.

The Steiner curriculum is designed to be responsive to the three developmental stages of childhood. The Physical from 0 - 7 years, The Imagination from 7 - 14 and the Spirit from 14 - 21 years.

According to the Steiner approach the first seven years are critical in determining the future wellbeing of children as this is when the foundations are laid for later learning and healthy development, including life-long physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual growth.



Proponents believe an atmosphere of loving warmth and guidance provide the optimal environment for healthy development and educators have a vital role in role-modelling and scaffolding a child's natural urge to explore and experiment.

2 APPROACHES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD

To this end, the Steiner approach for this age group prioritises and promotes:

- Loving interest in and acceptance of each child.
- Opportunities for self-initiated play with simple play materials as the essential activity for young children.
- Play makes it possible for young children to digest and understand their experiences.
- Awareness that young children learn through imitation, through the experience of diverse sensory impressions, and through movement. Their natural inclination is to actively explore their physical and social environment. The surroundings offer limits, structure and protection, as well as the possibility to take risks and meet challenges.
- A focus on real rather than virtual experiences to support the child in forming a healthy relationship to the world.
- Artistic activities such as storytelling, music, drawing and painting, rhythmic games, and role-modelling that foster the healthy development of imagination and creativity.
- Meaningful practical work such as cooking, baking, gardening, handwork and domestic activity that provide opportunities to develop unfolding human capacities. Here the emphasis is on the processes of life rather than on learning outcomes.
- Predictable rhythms through the day, week and year that provide security and a sense of the interrelationships and wholeness of life. Seasonal and other festivals are celebrated according to the cultural and geographical surroundings.



2 APPROACHES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD

According to the Steiner approach, the first three years of a child's life are especially important as this is when children are the most open and trusting and dependent on their caregivers. This means educators working with children in this age group need a special set of skills and personal qualities to ensure they are meeting the needs of each child to the best of their ability. They must also be aware of what it means to be a role model as children three-years and younger rely on imitation as one of the main ways of learning.

With this in mind Steiner educators consider and prioritise the following principles when providing education and care for children in the early years:

The attitude of the adult:

Educators must work to cultivate an attitude of trust, openness and gratitude towards the child and life more widely. They highlight the importance of meaningful daily activities such as work (cooking, cleaning, washing, gardening etc.), physical activity and exploring nature.

The environment of the child:

In order to best meet the needs of the child, the environment has to be quiet, simple, warm, peaceful and allow children to participate in safe exploring. Toys should be simple and made out of natural materials.

According to the Steiner approach the first seven years are critical

Rhythmical daily life:

Rhythmical and predictable daily life is practiced with an understanding of the child's need for:

- quality and quantity of sleep in a safe and peaceful environment
- healthy food
- physical exposure to nature including walking daily
- care taking filled with warmth, presence of being, and joy

This makes it possible for the child to feel safe and secure, and develop a healthy self-esteem.



Encounters between adults:

The child learns to meet the world through relating to others. For this reason, any encounter has to be respectful, caring and professional, whether with children, or adults.

Steiner in action

Steiner settings do not focus on teaching literacy and numeracy in the early years in the belief that these skills come more easily when children are given the opportunity to focus on developing their social, emotional and physical skills in an environment which emphasises play based learning experiences.

A typical Steiner day follows a reliable pattern, alternating between child led and teacher led activities. Children participate in structured activities such as painting, craft and domestic arts such as cooking, cleaning and self-care, as well as circle time, storytelling and music.

Steiner settings take great care in planning and setting up the environments where children learn and play, to ensure all sensory inputs are considered. Where possible there are no hard corners, muted colours are preferred, providers choose natural materials over plastics and toys are simple and encourage open-ended play.

References

International Association for Steiner/ Waldorf Early Childhood Education

EXPLORING THE REGGIO EMILIA APPROACH TO EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

An educational philosophy focused on preschool and primary education

The Reggio Emilia approach was started by Loris Malaguzzi and parents in the villages around Reggio Emilia in Italy following the devastating effects of World War II.

After the war, parents and educators sought a new approach to teaching their children based on the idea that a child's early years of development have a significant impact on who they become in later life.

With this as their foundation they created a program built on the principles of respect, responsibility, and community through exploration and discovery in a supportive and enriching environment based on the interests of the children through a self-guided curriculum.

The Reggio Emilia approach has been widely adopted across the globe and is based on these key principles:

- Children must have some control over the direction of their learning
- Children must be able to learn through the experiences of touching, moving, listening, seeing and hearing
- Children have a relationship with other children and with material items in the world that they must be allowed to explore
- Children must have endless ways and opportunities to express themselves

The Reggio Emilia approach to teaching young children puts the natural development of children as well as the close relationships that they share with their environment at the centre of its philosophy.

A program built on the principles of respect, responsibility, and community

2 APPROACHES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD

Early childhood programs that have successfully adapted to this educational philosophy share that they are attracted to Reggio Emilia because of the way it views and respects the child.

Parents are a vital component to the Reggio Emilia philosophy. Parents are viewed as partners, collaborators and advocates for their children. Teachers respect parents as each child's first teacher and involve parents in every aspect of the curriculum. It is not uncommon to see parents volunteering within Reggio Emilia classrooms throughout the school. This philosophy does not end when the child leaves the classroom. Most parents who choose to send their children to a Reggio Emilia program incorporate many of the principles within their parenting and home life. Even with this bridge between school and home, many people wonder what happens to Reggio Emilia children when they make the transition from this style of education to a non Reggio Emilia school. The answer is that there is some adjustment that must take place. In most school environments, intellectual curiosity is rewarded, so students continue to reap the benefits of Reggio Emilia after they've left the program.

For more information on the Reggio Emilia approach visit:

Reggio Emilia Australia Information Exchange

Reggio Emilia Approach



A CLOSE LOOK AT THE MONTESSORI APPROACH

Montessori is one of the fastest growing educational approaches in the world and an estimated 20,000 schools across the world currently teach in the Montessori style. This article explores some of the unique characteristics of the Montessori approach and looks at how it operates in the early childhood setting.

On 6 January 1907 Dr Maria Montessori, the first Italian woman to become a physician, opened the original Montessori School in San Lorenzo, Italy.

Dr Montessori based her educational methods on scientific observation of children's learning processes. Guided by her discovery that children teach themselves, Dr Montessori designed a "prepared environment" in which children could freely choose from a number of developmentally appropriate activities.

Now more than a hundred years later the Montessori approach is a well established and very popular option in Australia's education landscape for both early childhood teachers and parents. Please note that while the Montessori method is taught right through to high school this article focuses on early years education, specifically ages zero-six years.

The Montessori Method:

The Three-hour Work Period

In the three to six year old class there is one or two three-hour, uninterrupted, work period each day. In this time children have three hours to choose and carry out their own work and are not required to participate in any outside play, group story time, circle time, music, or any other activities which take time away from their own choice of activity.

During this time adults and children are asked to respect each other's concentration by not interrupting each other. Traditional group activities spontaneously arise according to the interest of a child or a group of children or are suggested by the teacher if necessary.

Multi-age grouping

Children are grouped in mixed ages and abilities in three to six year spans: zero to three and three to six. Montessori teachers believe this encourages constant interaction, problem solving, child-to-child teaching, and socialisation.

2 APPROACHES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD



Work centers

The physical environment is arranged according to subject area, and children are free to move around the room. There is no limit to how long a child can work on any one project or activity.

Children are encouraged to develop independence and the environment has been designed to facilitate this through: Construction in proportion to the child and his/her needs, beauty, harmony and cleanliness of the environment, order, a floor plan that promotes movement and activity and limitation of materials, so that only resources that support the child's development are included.

Teaching method

The Montessori method encourages educators to: "Teach by teaching, not by correcting" and children's effort and work is respected as it is. Through observation and record-keeping, teachers plan individual projects to enable each child to learn what he/she needs in order to improve.

Teaching ratio

This is guided by national standards for the zero to six age group, however teachers are trained to guide a child's research and exploration and capitalise on his/her interest and excitement about a subject. Teachers do not set assignments or dictate what to study or read, nor do they set a limit as to how far a child follows an interest.

Basic lessons

Montessori teachers spend time practicing lessons and must pass a written and oral exam on these lessons in order to be certified. Teachers are trained to recognise a child's readiness according to age, ability, and interest in a specific lesson and are able to guide individual progress.

2 APPROACHES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD

Areas of study

All subjects are interwoven and children are encouraged to have broad interests. A child can work on any material he/she understands at any time.

Learning styles

All kinds of intelligences and styles of learning are encouraged including: musical, bodily-kinesthetic, spatial, interpersonal, intrapersonal, intuitive, and the traditional linguistic and logical-mathematical (reading, writing, and math).

Assessment

There are no academic requirements for children aged zero to six, but according to the Montessori.edu website 'children are exposed to amazing amounts of knowledge and often learn to read, write and calculate beyond what is usually thought interesting to a child of this age.'

Character education

Education of character is considered equally with academic education and Montessori encourages children to learn how to take care of themselves, their environment, each other - cooking, cleaning, building, gardening, moving gracefully, speaking politely, being considerate and helpful, doing social work in the community, etc.

Montessori and Learning

INFANTS

Supporters of the Montessori approach maintain that the first three years of life are the most fundamental in the development of human beings and their potential.

With this in mind Montessori offers a range of learning environments: For working parents a Nido is for babies from two to three months until they are walking well. The Parent-Infant class enables parents and kids (aged two to 16 months) to get together with a Montessori educator and other young children to develop motor coordination, independence and language. Once kids are walking well they move into the toddler group.

The Montessori method encourages educators to: "Teach by teaching, not by correcting"

2 APPROACHES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD

PRESCHOOLERS

Maria Montessori observed that from birth to age six children have what she described as an 'absorbent' mind enabling them to learn how to speak, move and internalise order. She also observed periods of special sensitivity in children when they are attracted to certain stimuli in the environment enabling them to acquire specific skills and knowledge. Proponents of Montessori claim these periods occur universally for all kids at roughly the same age and providing them with the right environment and resources to practice these skills leads to optimal development.

With this in mind Montessori has four main areas in its pre-school program: Practical Life, Sensorial, Language and Mathematics. Some emphasis is also placed on Creative Arts, Music, Science, Geography and Cultural Studies.

The Practical Life component of the Montessori approach is the link between a child's home environment and the classroom. The practical life materials involve the children in precise movements which challenge them to concentrate, to work at their own pace uninterrupted, and to complete a cycle of work. Practical life encompasses four main areas: Control of Movement, Care of Person, Care of Environment and Grace and Courtesy.

SENSORIAL

The sensorial materials give a child experience in perceiving distinctions between similar and different things. Children then learn to grade a set of similar objects that differ in a regular and measurable way from most to least. Each piece of equipment is generally a set of objects which isolates a quality experienced through the senses such as colour, form, dimension, texture, temperature, volume, pitch, weight and taste. Precise language such as loud/soft, long/short, rough/smooth, circle, square, cube is used to describe these experiences to make the world meaningful to the child.



2 APPROACHES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD

LANGUAGE

Oral language acquired since birth is refined through a variety of activities such as songs, games, poems, stories and classified language cards. Preparation for writing begins with the practical life exercises and sensorial training. Muscular movement and fine motor skills are developed along with the ability of the child to distinguish the sounds which make up language. Children hear and see sounds but they can feel them by tracing sandpaper letters. When a number of letters have been learned the movable alphabet is introduced. These cardboard or wooden letters enable the child to reproduce his or her own words, then phrases, sentences and finally stories.

MATHEMATICS

Montessori advocates believe a child's mind is awakened to mathematical ideas through the sensorial experiences described above. Once children can see the distinctions of distance, dimension, graduation, identity, similarity and sequence they will be introduced to the functions and operations of numbers. Resources and materials available in the schools support the development of these skills.

CURRENT OPERATIONS

Interestingly, the name Montessori is not legally protected and can be used by anyone for any purpose. This means it's important for child care professionals interested in learning more about the approach to ensure they contact reputable training organisations or industry groups (see below for a list).

The Montessori Australia Foundation has a stated goal of becoming a self-regulating education system by 2057, educating 15 per cent of Australia's children. To learn more about the Montessori approach check out the links below.

Montessori Australia

Montessori Foundation

International Montessori Index

THE MINDCHAMPS APPROACH

The Origins of MindChamps '3-Mind' Education Model

MindChamps began in Sydney in 1998 as an educational research organisation, with the goal of finding and filling the gaps which exist in education systems across the world. This meant developing an educational approach suited to the demands of a world created by the Information Revolution.

The MindChamps model is an approach which draws on the research of the last 30 years in the areas of Education, Psychology, and Neuroscience to understand the key elements underpinning learning, creativity, and healthy emotional development. This research simply did not exist in the 19th and 20th Centuries, when most learning systems were developed. The model is also grounded in research into a fourth domain, theatre, with its focus on engagement, which is key to any successful educational approach.

Confidence, Creativity, Collaboration, Communication Skills, Compassion and Critical thinking

Why '3 Minds'?

In their 2007 book, *The 3-Mind Revolution*, MindChamps' founder David Chiem and its Dean of Research and Programme-Development, Brian Caswell, explain the genesis of the '3-Mind' approach. In a world where information is universally available, citizens are rewarded not for what they can memorise and recall, but for their learning mindset and for what they can do with information, both individually and in collaboration.

In the 21st Century, Confidence, Creativity, Collaboration, Communication Skills, Compassion, and Critical Thinking are just as important as Content, and the '3-Mind' approach emphasizes all these elements.

2 APPROACHES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD

The 3 Minds are:

THE CHAMPION MIND

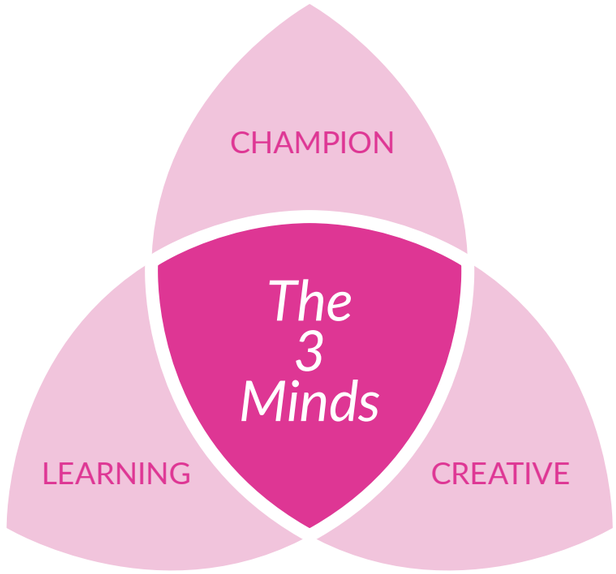
- The ability to celebrate our own uniqueness and the uniqueness of others
- Respect for accepted wisdom but the courage to move beyond it if necessary
- The mindset that treats adversity, and even failure, as a seed for growth

THE LEARNING MIND

- The development of a life-long enthusiasm for learning for its own sake
- The courage to try new approaches and the ability to learn from both successes and failures
- The vision to see how all things 'connect'

THE CREATIVE MIND

- A willingness to view things from multiple perspectives and to use them to create new insights and think outside the box
- Understanding that, in creativity, thinking, structure, and planning are as important as imagination
- Accepting that the 'first draft' is never the final product



2 APPROACHES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD

The S.M.I.L.E.S.™ Curriculum

The 3 Minds is a model for life-long learning. In the early childhood years (0 – 6 years), the key is to lay strong foundations for that life-long process. How a child experiences the world during this critical period influences social, emotional, and neural development which can influence learning and behaviour throughout life.

Drawing on decades of research into early childhood development, the MindChamps team isolated six key areas essential to healthy, balanced development.

These are the:

S ensory

M otor

I ntellectual

L inguistic

E motional and

S ocial

The research also showed that these elements are best developed 'in concert' (ie: using activities which combine all, or most, of the elements, simultaneously). This understanding is the basis of the integrative S.M.I.L.E.S.™ approach.



The S.M.I.L.E.S.™ Environment

S.M.I.L.E.S.™ activities are built on the understanding that children are hands-on, experiential learners. MindChamps educarers are trained to be unobtrusive facilitators of learning in an environment where learning activities are built on what the MindChamps development team call 'Crafted Play'.

In their book, *Preschool Parenting Secrets: Talking with the Sky*, Caswell and Chiem explain it this way:

For young children, play is enrichment. Play is how a child learns to make sense of the world, to mould together the tiny particles of experience that will lay the foundations of future creativity and intellectual development.

2 APPROACHES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD

and:

Our role… is not to teach, but to facilitate. Our responsibility is not to control, but to assist – to provide the flexible structures within which our children can be creative and develop their unique understanding of the world and their place in it.

Activities have a goal, but they must be, above all, engaging and playful. In a S.M.I.L.E.S.™ classroom, the children are encouraged to explore, experiment, and collaborate in their journey towards the goal, building communication and collaboration skills, empathy, resilience, independence, and confidence; all aspects of a developing Champion Mindset.

Language, music and physical activities are designed to simultaneously enhance learning.

The Learning Zones

Each classroom is divided into Six Learning Zones:

3 Imagination Zones (dedicated to Dramatic, Construction & Arts and Crafts activities)

and

3 Skills Zones (dedicated to Reading, Writing and Numeracy activities)

The adults in the room Observe, Reflect, and Respond to what is occurring, modelling approaches, asking generative questions, and gently guiding discovery, but never dictating responses or strategies. This builds confidence, resourcefulness, and collaboration in children and prepares them for future challenges. Language, music, and physical activities are designed to simultaneously enhance learning, cognitive development, and the gradual evolution of all six S.M.I.L.E.S.™ elements.

Educarers are specifically trained to leverage on the S.M.I.L.E.S.™ approach and the 6 Learning Zones to design Enquiry-based activities to promote curiosity and a passion for learning.

There is also a 'Connecting as One' space, where group activities such as shared reading, discussion, show and tell and other social pursuits take place.

2 APPROACHES TO EARLY CHILDHOOD

100% Respect & Zero Fear

The MindChamps philosophy of 100% Respect & Zero Fear is designed to nurture children to become young champions distinguishable by ten key values:

1. I am Creative
2. I am Compassionate
3. I am a Life-Long Learner
4. I am Confident
5. I am Grateful
6. I have Integrity
7. I am Self-Reflective
8. I Focus on the Beauty in Others
9. I Embrace Set-backs as Set-ups
10. I Value Feedback as a Seed for Growth

These ideals continue to drive MindChamps' research and the development of new educational initiatives based on solid data and the latest insights.

References and Further Reading:

mindchamps.org

The 3-Mind Revolution: A New World View for Global Leaders, Educators and Parents (2nd edition) by David Chiem & Brian Caswell, World Scientific, Singapore, 2016.

Preschool Parenting Secrets: Talking with the Sky by Brian Caswell & David Chiem in collaboration with Kylie Bell, World Scientific, Singapore, 2010.





Three

Child Care Centres



3 CHILD CARE CENTRES

WHAT ARE CHILD CARE CENTRES

An Overview

When a parent mentions that they're looking for child care, most of us would guess that they're trying to find a child care centre. That's because child care centres are the most popular type of formal child care used in Australia.

The 2017 Child Care Survey undertaken by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, found that the most commonly used formal child care for children under 12 was child care centres (37 per cent of all children) followed by outside school hours care for school-aged children (15 per cent).

When you find a child care centre to suit you and your child, it can become a comfortable part of your family's routine. Catharine, mother of Francesca, says that her child care centre always tries to maintain the parenting practices of the family, whether it is routine, rules, language, food preferences or issues of cultural diversity.

"Francesca loves going to child care. It took her a couple of weeks to adjust to the new routine, but by 4 to 6 weeks she had settled in and clearly loves it. Some mornings I am lucky if she stops to wave me off!"



3 CHILD CARE CENTRES

Child care centres provide regular full-time or part-time child care in places specially built or adapted for child care. They can be located on their own grounds, attached to schools, or even in shopping centres and office blocks. Child care centres may be run by private operators, local councils, community organisations, employers and non-profit organisations.

Centre-based care is also known as a 'child care centre', as the centres are often open from early morning until early evening. Typical operating hours for child care centres are 7:00 am to 6:00 pm on weekdays, although some centres may open longer each day, and on weekends. Centres are open at least 48 weeks of the year.

Child care centres usually cater for children aged from birth to five years. Each centre will have a number of children attending who will be different ages. State government regulations set limits on the number of children that can be cared for by each carer.

Under changes brought about by the Government's National Quality Framework (NQF), the educator to child ratios have been gradually standardised and improved across the country.



3 CHILD CARE CENTRES

The ratios set by the NQF are outlined below:

States/Territories	Service Type	Educator to Child Ratios
Children from birth to 24 months		
All States and Territories	Child care centre	1 educator to 4 children
Children aged 24 to 36 months		
ACT	Child care centre	1 educator to 5 children
NSW	Child care centre	1 educator to 5 children
NT	Child care centre	1 educator to 5 children
SA	Child care centre	1 educator to 5 children
QLD	Child care centre	1 educator to 5 children
TAS	Child care centre	1 educator to 5 children
VIC	Child care centre	1 educator to 4 children
WA	Child care centre	1 educator to 5 children

3 CHILD CARE CENTRES

States/Territories	Service Type	Educator to Child Ratios
Children aged 36 months up to and including preschool age		
NSW	Child care centre/preschool	1 educator to 10 children
NT	Child care centre/preschool	1 educator to 11 children
QLD	Child care centre/preschool	1 educator to 11 children
SA	Child care centre/preschool	1 educator to 11 children
TAS	Child care centre Preschool program	1 educator to 10 children 2 educators to 25 children
VIC	Child care centre/preschool	1 educator to 11 children
WA	Child care centre/preschool	1 educator to 10 children
ACT	Child care centre/preschool	1 educator to 11 children
Children over preschool age		
NSW	Centre-based care	1 educator to 15 children
NT	Centre-based care	1 educator to 15 children
QLD	Centre-based care	1 educator to 15 children
SA	Centre-based care	1 educator to 15 children
TAS	Centre-based care	1 educator to 15 children
VIC	Centre-based care	1 educator to 15 children
WA	Centre-based care	1 educator to 13 children, or 1 educator to 10 children if kindergarten children in attendance
ACT	Centre-based care	1 educator to 11 children
Children aged birth to 13 years		
All States and Territories	Family day care	1 educator to 7 children with no more than 4 children pre school age or younger including educator's own children younger than 13 years of age at home with no other adult to look after them

3 CHILD CARE CENTRES

Some centres also offer other types of child care such as:

- Sessional care for morning or afternoon sessions
- Extended hours care for care outside the centre's normal operating hours
- Outside school hours care for before and after school

See a summary of how child care centres compare with other types of child care in our child care comparison table.

Child care centres usually cater for children aged between birth and five years



3 CHILD CARE CENTRES

What will my child do at a child care centre?

Child care centres offer a mix of education, care and recreational programs to suit children of different ages. Most child care centres have indoor and outdoor areas with toys and equipment.

Some typical activities include:

- Arts and crafts
- Cooking
- Drama
- Dance
- Excursions
- Games
- Music
- Reading
- Sport

There is also supervised play time with water, sand and outdoor equipment such as climbing frames. Catharine believes that the stimulating environment at her child care centre assists her daughter's development.

"The centre has a much greater variety of toys and activities than we have at home - the combination of part-time child care and part-time at home with me works very well for our family."



3 CHILD CARE CENTRES

How do I find a child care centre?

Some child care centres have great reputations, and you may hear the same names mentioned by friends and family. Ask these parents what they think about the centre, and what their children's experiences are. Use our **child care centre search** to find child care centres in your local area.

There can be long waiting lists for popular centres, or centres in high-demand areas like inner city suburbs with many young families. If possible, put your name down on waiting lists before you need the care, and try to have a few options rather than rely on just one centre. The more flexible you are with the days you require, the more likely you are to find a place.

Places often become available at the end of the school year (or at the start of each school term in some States) when older children leave care to attend kindergarten or pre-school.

How do I choose the right child care centre for my child?

If you can, visit several child care centres to see how they are run, and watch the children and staff together. Jackie, mother of Paris and Mia, recommends that parents take their child with them on the visit.

She advises parents to

"observe how the staff react to your child, not necessarily how they react to you. Ask to stay for a little while and let your child wander and play with the other children."

When you are choosing a child care centre, think about:

- **Location:** Does the child care centre need to be close to home, work or another carer?
- **Cost:** What are the fees charged, and what do they include?
- **Availability:** How far ahead do I need to book? Are places available on the days and times when I need them?
- **Staff:** What qualifications do the staff have?

3 CHILD CARE CENTRES

You should also consider your child's needs and interests:

- Are the children made to feel welcome by the staff and other children?
- Do the activities suit my child's interests? If my child doesn't want to join in organised activities, is there supervised free play?
- Is the environment suitable and interesting? Are there a range of toys and equipment in each room?
- Are any meals provided? Do they cater to special dietary needs (e.g. allergies)?
- Other considerations. Do they administer medication? Do they have a television and is it supervised?



Catharine is delighted with her child care centre and says her daughter is very happy there.

"We continue to be impressed with the attention paid by the staff to the separate needs of each child, from the individual development programs to the tailored menus," she says.



3 CHILD CARE CENTRES

As a parent, you may also want to become involved in the child care centre's activities:

- Can I talk to staff about my child's needs and activities offered?
- Am I able to visit the centre at any time?
- Are parents' views and concerns taken into account by the centre? Can parents become involved in the centre's decision-making and activities?

Use our Child Care Centre Checklist to help you assess and compare different child care centres.

For many parents, child care centres are a reliable and convenient place for their children to learn and play. Jackie is very comfortable leaving her daughter at child care in the mornings.

"I know my daughter is comfortable here, so separation is easy. Her day begins with one of the carer's holding her hand leading her to her favourite activity or one of her friends," she says.

With a structured environment, qualified staff and a child-friendly environment, children from as young as six weeks can thrive in the right child care centre.



HOW DO I CHOOSE A CHILD CARE CENTRE

Here are 10 factors to consider when choosing a child care service for your family.

1. **Location** does the service need to be close to home or work or somewhere else?
2. **Cost** what are the fees and what do they include?
3. **Availability** does the service have the days you require? Are casual spots available?
4. **Staff** do you and your children like the staff and feel welcome?
5. **Facilities** are the rooms and gardens interesting, well organised and inspirational?
6. **Food** can you see the weekly menus and are special requirements catered for?
7. **Sleep** what is the service's approach to sleep and rest time? Are they flexible with children who want to skip a nap?
8. **Program** are the activities interesting, and varied?
9. **Quality** has the service been assessed by ACECQA and what was the rating?
10. **Communication** does the service offer digital or paper based learning stories where you can see what children do during the day?

3 CHILD CARE CENTRES

When considering your child care options it is very important to visit a number of services and spend some time getting to know the staff. First hand experience is the best way to judge whether a service 'feels right'.

Be sure to print a copy of our **Child Care Centre Checklist** when you visit a service to remind you what to look out for.

Remember, that every family is unique and the preferences and priorities of one family will be different from another. It's important to keep this in mind as you set about researching your options, as you are likely to come across parents and carers with different experiences and opinions to your own.

Children thrive in high quality early childhood settings and you can **learn more about how to identify a high-quality child care service here.**





3 CHILD CARE CENTRES

THE VALUE OF VISITING CHILD CARE CENTRES

You might also find it helpful to read our article on **comparing the different child care options**, so you can be certain the decision you make is the best for your child and the rest of your family.

One of the best ways to make your final decision about which child care service to use, is to compile a short list of your top two or three services and then visit them. Visiting your preferred child care service during normal operating hours will give you great insight in to how the staff interact with the children, how the children interact with each other, and ultimately whether the service is the right place for your child.

Most child care services are happy for parents to drop in, don't feel awkward about visiting and make sure you ask lots of questions.

It is worth spending a little time planning your visit so you gain an accurate idea of how the service works and how well it meets the needs of your child.

The following preparations will help you make your visit worthwhile:

- Print a copy of our **Child Care Centre Checklist** to take with you. The checklist will be a useful reminder of things to look out for and potential questions to ask.
- Make sure you visit the service in 'non-peak hours' i.e. avoid drop off and pick up times. Although most services allow parents to drop in at anytime, for your first visit it might be worthwhile calling and making an appointment, this will ensure a staff member is available to show you around and answer any questions.
- Pay attention to the interactions between staff and children, take note of the activities the children are doing, check out the environment and the sleeping, playing and eating spaces and most importantly ask lots of questions.

When you have successfully found a service, read our article on **Helping Your Child Adjust to Child Care** to ensure the first day is happy for everyone!

CHILD CARE CHECKLIST

We have compiled a useful checklist on the things parents should note when considering a centre for their child.

Before you visit/Over the phone	YES	NO	N/A
Think about the days and times you require care and call the centre to make sure it can meet your requirements.	○	○	○
Ask whether you can change your days of care if your work situation changes and ask how much notice you will be required to give.	○	○	○
Think about how you will travel to the centre and whether it is in a good location. Would you prefer it closer to home, work or a family member's home and is it close to public transport or car parking?	○	○	○
Ask what the hours of operation are and which days of the year the centre is closed.	○	○	○
What are the daily fees?	○	○	○
Does the centre offer sessional or occasional care?	○	○	○
Can you claim the Child Care Subsidy?	○	○	○
Ask what the procedure is if you are running late to pick up your child and what fees will be charged.	○	○	○
Find out whether the centre can meet your religious and/or cultural requirements.	○	○	○
Find out whether the centre offers an induction program which you and your child can participate in.	○	○	○

During your visit – Initial impressions	YES	NO	N/A
Is the atmosphere relaxed and happy? Can you hear laughter and the sounds of children playing?	○	○	○
Is the reception area clean, tidy and organised?	○	○	○
Do the rooms seem well organised, clean and tidy?	○	○	○
Were you offered introductions of all staff and a tour of the centre?	○	○	○

Accreditation	YES	NO	N/A
Has the service been assessed under the National Quality Framework?	○	○	○
If so what was the rating?	○	○	○
Does the service have a Quality Improvement Plan? Can you view the plan?	○	○	○

Security	YES	NO	N/A
Does the centre seem safe and secure?	○	○	○
Did a centre employee greet you at the door and sign you in?	○	○	○
Did you notice restricted areas and security access areas?	○	○	○
Are centre staff easy to identify and do they wear name badges?	○	○	○

Health and safety	YES	NO	N/A
Are there procedures in place to document any accidents?			
Is there an established fire drill and are exits clearly marked?			
How will you be advised if your child is sick or has an accident?			
What action are you required to take if your child is sick or has an accident?			
Are staff members who can administer CPR and first aid available at all times?			
Are centre staff able to administer medication?			
Does the centre have a sun protection policy?			
Are children required to wear hats and sun block whenever they are outside?			
Where do children sleep? What sort of mattresses and coverings are used? Are you required to purchase a set of sheets?			
Where are nappies changed? Does the area look clean and hygienic?			
What is the centre hand washing policy?			
How does the centre ensure No Jab No Play is enforced?			
What is the procedure in case of a breakout of a communicable illness?			

Lines of communication	YES	NO	N/A
Were you given a copy of the centre's operating policies and procedures?			
Do you agree with the centre's philosophy?			
Do you understand what your responsibilities and obligations will be?			
Do you understand what the centre will take responsibility for?			
Do you understand what you will need to authorise or provide permission for separately i.e medications, extra curricular activities?			
How will you receive feedback about your child's day? Information may include preferred activities, food eaten, children played with and so on.			
Are there regular newsletters to keep parents informed about what's going on in the centre?			
How should you contact the centre if you need to talk to staff about something? Should you call, make an appointment, email or drop in?			

Management, staff and supervision	YES	NO	N/A
Who manages the child care centre? Can you meet him/her?			
Does the manager also supervise the staff?			
What are the child to carer ratios at the centre?			
What background checks are completed on staff?			

Management, staff and supervision *cont.*	YES	NO	N/A
What qualifications do staff members hold?			
What is the staff turnover rate?			
Is there a balance between older and younger carers and men and women?			
Does the centre have staff members from a range of ethnic backgrounds?			
What is the centre's procedure for dealing with complaints against staff?			
Does the centre hold adequate insurance?			
Do staff members interact with children or have a minding role?			
Are children supervised at all times?			
How do staff members deal with behavioural issues?			
Are the staff warm and engaged in what they are doing?			
Do you feel comfortable approaching staff to chat and ask questions?			

Food and mealtimes	YES	NO	N/A
Are standards for food preparation and cleanliness high?			
Is all food cleaned up after snack and meal times?			
What time is food offered? Is food available outside of these times if children are hungry?			

Food and mealtimes *cont.*	YES	NO	N/A
Are children allowed to eat at their own pace?			
What happens if your child doesn't eat at the designated time?			
Is water offered and available all day?			
What food/beverages are you expected to provide?			
How does the centre cope with food allergies and intolerances?			
Can the centre accommodate individual dietary requirements?			
Is there a weekly menu on display, does it look interesting and varied?			
Does the centre have a nutrition policy and do you agree with the policy?			
What is your centre's approach to cakes/birthday treats?			

Daily timetable	YES	NO	N/A
Does the centre have a daily timetable which you can see?			
Can your child's individual needs be accommodated if necessary?			
What is the procedure for putting children down at sleep time?			
What is the procedure for children who don't want to sleep?			

3 CHILD CARE CENTRES

Environment	YES	NO	N/A
Is the building light and pleasant to be in with good ventilation and/or air conditioning?			
Does the building seem well maintained?			
Is there plenty of space for the children to play?			
Does the outside play equipment accommodate children of all different ages?			
Is there an outside area with plenty of shade?			
Are there places where children can go for quiet play?			
Are the toilets and sinks clean and easy for the children to use?			
Are the sleeping areas separate to the play areas?			
Do children of different ages have separate areas to play or do they interact?			

Toys and equipment	YES	NO	N/A
Is there a wide range of toys and books provided for the children?			
Are the toys at the right height for children to reach?			
Can you see a range of toys suitable for children of all age groups?			
Do the toys look clean and intact?			
Can parents and children get involved in decisions about the purchase of new toys and equipment?			
Do staff members help children play with the toys?			

3 CHILD CARE CENTRES

Planned activities and programs	YES	NO	N/A
Does the centre follow the Early Years Learning Framework?			
Does the service offer documented diaries or learning stories where parents can view the activities of the day?			
Are there online/social networking forums where parents can keep track of their children during the day?			
Is there a set daily routine?			
Does the centre offer a range of programs for the children to participate in?			
Do these programs cater for all ages?			
How are these programs developed? Are they designed to be educational? Do they take into account the cultural and religious diversity in the group?			
What percentage of your child's day will be spent on planned programs and what percentage will be spent on free play?			
Does the centre enable children to participate in activities they might not be able to do at home such as painting, water play, collage making and playing in a sand pit?			
Does the centre do excursions? If so, what is the cost and how are they managed?			

For a printable version of this checklist click here.



3 CHILD CARE CENTRES



HOW TO MANAGE ISSUES WITH YOUR CHILD CARE SERVICE

No matter how much time and effort parents put in to **finding a child care service**, it is almost inevitable that problems will arise at some stage. Dealing with these concerns as soon as they come to hand is the best way of ensuring a satisfactory outcome for you, your child and the care provider.

Managing Complaints

In Australia child care services are required to develop and follow grievance and/or complaints handling procedures, however, many parents are unaware of this and are unsure about the most effective way of dealing with their concerns.

Make a point of asking your service about its complaints handling procedures before you enrol your child. Where possible you should follow the established procedures when you have a concern.

The issues parents have in relation to their service can usually be divided into two categories. The first group of concerns are personal and relate to individual worries about the care given to a particular child, or differences in belief about the best ways to care for a child.

Some common examples of these kinds of complaints are carers letting children get dirty during the day or not giving children enough to eat. These concerns

are best dealt with through direct communication with your care provider or the director of the service your child attends and can often be dealt with through a simple chat when the matter first comes to hand.

The second category of issues regularly identified by parents are to do with child care services which break the rules and regulations governing how they are supposed to operate.

Some examples of rule violations are child care services which care for more children than they are licensed for, the use of inappropriate discipline and leaving children unattended.

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) is the national body working to ensure that child care services stick to the established rules and provide high quality early childhood education under the National Quality Framework.

However, the State and Territory Governments are responsible for dealing with concerns and complaints about individual services so if you have spoken to your service about your concerns and feel they are not responding or following the complaints/grievance procedure you can contact the relevant regulatory authority in your State or Territory to complain. **Click here** to identify who you should contact.

The Importance of Communication

Good communication is a key part of avoiding or reducing complaints and ideally should begin before your child enters the care service. An easy-to-read written agreement outlining how the care arrangement will operate will serve as a reminder of each party's obligations. This agreement should be reviewed regularly to take into account any changes in the relationship.

Both parents and carers have an obligation to stick to the guidelines set out in this agreement and should work on changing rules which aren't working. Successful compromises can often be worked out when the parents and carers like and trust each other and ultimately this will be in the best interests of your child.

Where possible you should follow the established procedures when you have a concern

3 CHILD CARE CENTRES

Dealing With Problems

Talking with your care provider as soon as a problem emerges will help you resolve your concerns quickly and effectively. Consider the following points before you have the conversation:

- Clearly identify your concerns and know how you would like to resolve them – adopt a problem solving approach to the conversation.
- Be very clear about where you stand on the issue and think about what you would be willing to compromise on and what, in your opinion, is non-negotiable in the development of a solution.
- Be sure to choose an appropriate time and location to explain your concerns. It may not be constructive to hold the discussion in front of your child or other parents.
- Adopt a tactful non-accusatory manner and be sure to cover positives as well as negatives. This will help to reassure the carer that the concern isn't personal.
- Take time to listen to the carer's point of view and make sure you clarify facts and feelings until you arrive at a common understanding of the problem.
- Try to finish the conversation with an understanding about how the situation will be progressed, even if you agree to disagree and decide to move your child to another service.
- Let your care provider know if, in your opinion, the situation improves and if it doesn't either contact your **State authority** or explore the possibility of moving your child in to another service.

Having regular informal chats with your care provider will help you build a positive, open relationship which should make it easier for you to avoid issues before they arise and address any concerns which do come up.

Remember that maintaining a successful child care arrangement is a two-way partnership that requires your constant involvement. Despite the excellent care available in Australia you may never feel completely satisfied with the arrangement and it is important to establish a comfort level so that you are able to leave your child at the service each day without worrying!



Four

Pre School

Kids Club
EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING CENTRES
Where your child's future begins

"New School" Parent Anxiety?
Breathe! Your child is at Kids Club.



School Readiness Program
Preparing future generations for
big school & beyond



The environment as
the Third Teacher
Amazing learning environments
and play spaces inducing creativity



Education for life
Our bespoke holistic curriculum
inspired by Reggio Emilia

ENQUIRE NOW FOR SPECIAL OFFER

1300 543 725
kidsclubchildcare.com.au

WHAT IS PRESCHOOL/ KINDERGARTEN/PREP?

Preschool is a planned educational program for children in the years before a child commences school. Children are usually aged between 3 and 5 years. Preschool may take place in a range of settings including a purpose-built building, in a community setting, a school, as part of a long day care centre or a mobile or visiting service.

Preschool generally runs between the hours of 9:00am and 3:00pm similar to school hours although this may vary by State and by service so check with the provider. The terms kindergarten or prep are also used in some States.

Is my child eligible for the Child Care Subsidy if they attend preschool?

Children who attend a preschool program within a long day care centre are eligible for the Child Care Subsidy. However, children who attend preschool in a service which only offers a preschool program, for example a standalone preschool operating within school hours, will not attract the new Child Care Subsidy.

If you are unsure about which category a preschool belongs to, you should contact the service to check.

Universal access to early childhood education

The Australian government funds 15 hours per week of preschool for children in the year before they start school. State and Territory governments are responsible for providing the preschool programs, which are delivered in a range of settings including child care centres, stand-alone preschools and school-based preschools, to try and encourage uptake.

While attendance is not compulsory, research shows that participating in a quality preschool program can significantly increase education and life outcomes for children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

4 PRESCHOOL

Participating in preschool can also help children adjust more easily to the requirements and routine of primary school.

Preschool is subject to the same quality requirements as other early childhood services, and preschool programs must have an early childhood teacher in attendance and adhere to the National Quality Standard.

Is preschool free?

No, not necessarily. Parents may still have to pay depending on how the State or Territory government funds the initiative. The Australian government provides the money directly to the States and Territories and it is up to them to work out how best to fund provision of early childhood education.

However, under the arrangements cost must not be a barrier to participation and preschool is often free or very affordable.

It's also important to note that preschool programs delivered in standalone preschools do not attract the Child Care Subsidy, only programs delivered in long day care centres attract the subsidy.

To learn more about how preschool is funded in your State or Territory contact the authority below.

NSW	Department of Education	education.nsw.gov.au	1300 679 332
VIC	Department of Education and Training	education.vic.gov.au	03 9637 2000
QLD	Department of Education	qed.qld.gov.au	1800 454 639
WA	Department of Education	education.wa.edu.au	08 9264 4111
SA	Department for Education	education.sa.gov.au	1800 088 158
TAS	Department of Education	education.tas.gov.au	1800 816 057
ACT	Education Directorate	education.act.gov.au	02 6207 5111
NT	Department of Education	education.nt.gov.au	08 8999 5659

4 PRESCHOOL

Tips for a Pain-Free First Day at Preschool

1. Your child's first day at preschool will be an exciting and emotional event for the whole family. As a parent the thought of sending your child off to preschool could be slightly traumatic and for children the reality of starting 'school' can be a scary yet highly anticipated event.

2. Preschool is designed to help children transition from life in the family, or a child care centre, to big school. Preschool programs aim to develop children's communication, problem solving and thinking skills and to familiarise them with the routines and rhythms of school life.

3. Emphasis is placed on the importance of teaching children independence and giving them the confidence to ask for what they want or need in a classroom environment.

4. With a little preparation and planning prior to the big day you can help ensure your child's first day at preschool is a positive and rewarding experience for all of you.





4 PRESCHOOL

Before the First Day

- Talk to your child about preschool and what an exciting adventure it will be. Have a chat to your child's educators and gain as much information as possible so you can answer all your child's questions about what they will do, where they will go to the toilet, where and when they will eat lunch and so on. Being as thorough and as honest as you can, will hopefully ease your child's concerns.
- Help your child prepare mentally for preschool by spending time with them during the day or at weekends doing activities for concentrated amounts of time, such as reading a book together for fifteen minutes or playing a board game. Listening and direction games such as Simon Says will teach your child how to follow instructions.
- In the weeks leading up to preschool encourage your child to be as independent as possible when it come to dressing, feeding, going to the toilet, looking for things and washing their hands. This will give your child the confidence to perform these tasks on their own at preschool.
- If possible spend time with other preschool children in the days leading up to starting so your child builds up a sense of anticipation and confidence in dealing with other preschoolers.
- Visit the local preschool with your child during school hours. This will ensure your child is familiar with the staff and surroundings and will give you an opportunity to ask any questions you may have.
- Find out what your child should take with them to preschool for example, sun hat and sun block, water bottle, lunch box, pencils. Make a point of labelling all of the items, this will help your child identify their belongings and will save money and possible upsets in the case of your little one losing something important to them.

On the First Day

- Get up early to ensure you have plenty of time to get everything done in a peaceful and positive environment.
- Plan a celebratory breakfast, make a fuss and present them with a small gift, such as a new bag or a Starting Preschool Certificate, this will make your child feel very important in their new role.
- Pack a change of clothes, so that your child has something of their own to change into, in the case of a messy emergency!
- When you arrive at the preschool, take your child in, show them where to put their belongings and introduce them to the teacher.

4 PRESCHOOL

- If you are leaving straight away, give your child a cuddle and kiss, say goodbye in a positive voice and leave. Try not to turn around if your child starts crying as this only prolongs the inevitable. Remember almost as soon as you are out of sight your child will have stopped crying.
- If you are staying, let your child do their own thing, but remain within their line of vision. Encourage your child to be as independent as possible. If you leave before the end of the session, give your child a kiss and a cuddle, say goodbye in a positive voice and leave.

Talk to your child about preschool and what an exciting adventure it will be

In the Long Term

- If you have time, try and get involved in school life. This might include helping out in the classroom from time to time, going on class trips or assisting with special events such as school fairs.
- Maintain regular communication with your child's teacher, both on a formal and informal basis. Remember you know your child better than anyone and are in the best position to provide the teacher with information to help them ensure your child receives maximum benefits at preschool.
- Advise your child's teacher if something happens at home which could impact on your child's performance at preschool. Things which might affect your child include the birth of a sibling, divorce, moving house, visitors or a death or illness in the family.
- Remember that preschool should be a positive and rewarding experience for your child. By employing some of the suggestions provided above, you will be working to ensure that your child has a great time from the outset.

TRANSITIONING FROM PRESCHOOL TO BIG SCHOOL

Preschool is designed to ease children into the structured learning environment and routines of the formal school system. However, many children only attend preschool on a part time basis so the transition to full-time school can still be a bit of a shock. No matter how well your child adapted to life in preschool it is worth taking some time to prepare him or her for life at 'Big School'.



4 PRESCHOOL

Before the first day

- Talk to your child in advance of starting school and tell them where they will be going and what they will be doing. Talk openly about school and tell them stories about your most enjoyable moments at school.
- Take your child to visit the school on a few occasions. Find out where the important places are and show your child how to find their classroom, the toilets, the canteen, the office and so on.
- Answer all your child's questions openly and honestly and reassure them that everything is okay.
- Attend orientation, buddy and transition programs at the school if they are available. These services can be a great way of building confidence.
- Remind your child that they will make lots of new friends and find out if any of the children in your child's preschool will be starting at the same school. A few familiar faces may be very reassuring for your child.
- Teach your child about the rules they will need to follow, so they don't come as a surprise on the first day.

First day jobs for you

Arm yourself with information to ensure you can deal with things which comes up:

- Find out the obvious stuff:
  - What time does school start and finish?
  - What is the name of your child's teacher?
  - Is there before and after school care and vacation care? If so, how do I enrol for these programs?
- Where do you take your child on arrival and where do you collect him/her at the end of the day?
- What will your child need? For example uniforms, hats, sunscreen, lunch, books and pencils.
- What is the standard uniform and where can you buy one?
- How can you get involved in school life?
- What happens if your child falls ill during school hours?
- How can you contact staff? Do you need to organise it through the office or can you approach your child's teacher in person?
- What do you do if you suspect your child is being bullied?
- What special programs and extra curricular activities does the school offer?

Helping in the transition - what you can do at home

As mentioned above preschool is designed to ease your child into the more structured and rigorous learning environment offered at school. For many children the biggest challenges when moving from preschool to school is sitting still for long periods and completing tasks which require patience and concentration.

Skills that may help your child transition easily into the school environment include:

- The ability to pay attention for extended periods
- The ability to focus on and complete assigned tasks
- The ability to work with rules and regulations
- The ability to work independently



You can support your child in the development of these skills by spending some time on the following activities before they start school:

- Reading is a great way of increasing your child's attention span. Take cues from your child as to how long they can pay attention. In the beginning, teachers may expect a child to attend a group activity for about 20 minutes and by the end of the first year this will increase to around 40 minutes.
- Introduce your child to new experiences for example attend a children's play or visit your local museum. Provide guidelines so your child knows when it is appropriate to talk, go to the toilet and when they have to wait for their turn.
- Give your child responsibilities at home. Start assigning chores for your child to complete independently such as setting the table, helping with the laundry or unloading items from the dishwasher.
- Practice Writing - encourage your child to write new words, copy letters and numbers and draw pictures.
- Encourage counting and measuring activities and show your child how these skills are used in the real world, for example weigh the fruit when you go grocery shopping.

4 PRESCHOOL

- Practice using the family computer or take your child to your local library and show your child some basic functions.
- Build your child's co-operation and team skills by playing games that involve taking turns.
- Play school games with your child, pretend you are calling the roll, try on their uniform, write some pretend lessons up on a blackboard at home or practice writing in a notebook.
- Encourage your child to talk about their daily experiences with you, ask lots of questions and keep the conversation flowing.
- As much as possible, offer your child natural opportunities to build skills that enhance their readiness for school and at the same time keep it fun.

On the first day

If you do enough preparation your child's first day at school should go well, to make the first day special consider some of the following ideas:

- Encourage your child to go to bed early so they are up in enough time to get ready in a peaceful and relaxed fashion. A mad rush will be stressful for everyone.
- Prepare a nutritious breakfast and pack lunch the night before so you don't have to think about it.
- Leave for school in plenty of time, if possible travel with your child by foot, car or public transport and talk through any last concerns.
- See your child into their classroom, put all their gear somewhere and find your child's teacher.
- When it's time to say goodbye give your child a cuddle and in a bright voice explain that you are off and that you will see them later, then leave.
- Your child is bound to be tired their first day so head straight home for a special afternoon tea. Spend some time chatting to your child about their big day before you launch into the evening routine.

Get Involved!

Remember, your child's school is part of your local community so if you have the time try and get involved: volunteer for working bees, do canteen duty, accompany the class on excursions and try to attend sports days and fetes. Your child will find the transition to school easier if they know you're involved and taking an interest.



Five Family Day Care

AN OVERVIEW OF FAMILY DAY CARE

Many families considering child care are familiar with child care centres and nannies, however some may be less familiar with family day care.

For families seeking an alternative to centre-based care, family day care is an early childhood education and care option that provides high-quality early learning in an educator's own home.

What is family day care?

Family day care is a quality, home based early childhood education and care service for children aged from six weeks through to 12 years.



Family day care accounts for 10 per cent of Australia's entire early childhood education and care sector with more than 14,000 educators helping to grow and shape the lives of some 131,600 children around the country.

The core elements of family day care are well aligned with the National Quality Framework, the National Quality Standard and the Early Years Learning Framework, all of which are key components of the national legislation introduced in January 2012.

Like long day care centres, family day care provides early childhood education and care services for children across Australia and parents who choose family day care are eligible for the Child Care Subsidy.

5 FAMILY DAY CARE

The main differences between family day care and child care care centres are:

- Education and care are provided by an individual early childhood professional operating within their own home.
- Educators work with small groups of no more than four children under school age* at any one time.
- Educators work with an approved service that carries out regular visits to monitor the children's individual development and provide support.

*An educator may care for 3 additional school age children, outside of school hours

In addition, family day care is the only type of approved service offering 24/7 child care providing working Australian families with flexible full-time, part-time, weekend, or overnight care, depending on the requirements of the parents and availability of the educator.

Educators are normally available on weekdays, but family day care can also support parents with unusual circumstances, for example shift workers or people with jobs which require travel.

It can be a great option for children with disabilities or special needs due to the smaller groups and strong bonds that are often formed with the educator.

See a summary of how family day care compares with other types of child care in our child care comparison table.

Who provides family day care?

Most family day care services are established and operated by community groups or local government authorities, such as a church or council. Some private for-profit organisations also provide family day care.

The scheme or coordination unit also helps parents choose a suitable educator and is available to monitor children's wellbeing, progress, and learning. The scheme/coordination unit can also manage relief care if a family's usual educator is unwell or plans to take leave.

The coordination unit works in a close partnership with educators to ensure they uphold organisational values and meet requirements set by government legislation. The Australian Government provides funding to the schemes/ coordination units to support the network of educators across the country.

Educators are visited regularly by trained fieldworkers, with many coordination units facilitating play sessions and offering toy library services to ensure that children have a variety of stimulating play experiences.

How much does family day care cost?

Fees for family day care vary according to location, the educator's qualifications, the hours of care, and the age of the child. However, the typical fee range is $7.50-$16.80 per hour, dependent on location and service. Some educators provide food, nappies and transport, and these costs will be added to the hourly rates.

Quality and accreditation of family day care services

As mentioned above family day care operates under the National Quality Framework and educators must meet the same qualifications requirements as educators working in centre-based care settings.

All educators must also pass a police or criminal history check prior to commencing work in family day care and must be fully insured, hold a current first aid certificate, have undertaken current, approved anaphylaxis and emergency asthma management training, and maintain a safe environment.

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) is responsible for ensuring family day care services meet the requirements of the National Quality Framework and local approved family day care services work with individual family day care educators to ensure high standards across the board.

What will my child do at family day care?

Family day care offers a mix of education, care and recreational programs to suit children of different ages. A typical day in family day care may involve:

- Reading
- Arts and crafts
- Excursions
- Cooking
- Drama
- Dance
- Music
- Sport
- Games
- Completing homework

Family day care can provide a safe, natural home-based environment for your child

5 FAMILY DAY CARE



The home-based nature of family day care will provide children with the opportunity to engage in outdoor activities such as sand and water play in the backyard of their educator's home. Educators will also often take children on excursions to local community events, playgrounds, libraries and organised playgroup sessions.

How do I find and choose a family day care educator?

When choosing a family day care, think about:

- When you need care
- Where you need care – how will your child travel to and from the educator's house?
- Your budget
- Your child's needs. Are there any special requirements for language, diet, behaviour or development?
- Your values and parenting philosophy.

Contact your local family day care service to discuss the type of family day care you require. You can also use our **family day care search** to find family day care and in-home care in your state or territory.

Before finalising your choice, it's helpful to visit the educator's home to see how they interact with children and confirm the setting is right.
You can also ask to see references from other parents or check parent reviews on the CareforKids.com.au website.

5 FAMILY DAY CARE

Our **family day care checklist** suggests points to consider when choosing your educator.

Family day care can provide a safe, natural home-based environment for your child, with flexible routines and quality care. The smaller setting can also foster strong relationships between the children, educator and parents.

With a strong network of experienced family day care educators in Australia, it's definitely a type of child care worth exploring.

For further information regarding family day care visit Family Day Care Australia.



5 FAMILY DAY CARE

FAMILY DAY CARE CHECKLIST

Use this checklist as a reminder of all the important things to look out for when you pay a visit to a potential Family Day Care

Initial impressions	YES	NO	N/A
Is the atmosphere relaxed and happy? Can you hear laughter and the sounds of children playing?			
Do you and your child feel welcome?			
Is the reception area clean, tidy and organised?			
Do the rooms seem well organised, clean and tidy?			
Is there anything that appears to be out of place?			

Security and safety	YES	NO	N/A
Does the home seem safe and secure?			
Are there safety gates & safety caps on electrical outlets?			
Have all educators and their immediate family who may be in contact with the children undergone police and background checks?			
Are the radiators and heaters covered?			
Are medicines and household cleaners locked away or out of reach?			
Are there cords dangling from curtains or drapes?			
Is there air conditioning, good light, heat and ventilation?			

Security and safety *cont.*	YES	NO	N/A
Are the fire exits adequate?			
Are there established emergency procedures?			
Are outside play areas safe from traffic and water?			
Is the furniture and play equipment safe?			
Are policies in place to report and document any accidents?			
Are educators who know how to administer CPR and/or first aid available at all times?			
Transportation of children - what is the child restraints policy if children are transported by car/taxi?			

Hygiene	YES	NO	N/A
Are food preparation and eating areas clean and tidy?			
Is the rest of the house clean and tidy?			
Is all food cleaned up after snack and meal times?			
Is information on policies such as hygiene procedures available?			

People and Environment	YES	NO	N/A
How long has the family day care service been running?			
How many children are cared for and what are the ages?			

People and environment *cont.*	YES	NO	N/A
What type of background checks are completed on the educators and family members who may come into contact with the children?			
What is the minimum qualification requirement for educators?			
Does the educator care for children everyday? If not,how often are other educators used and how are they chosen?			
How do educators deal with emotional issues eg: separation anxiety?			
Is there an orientation program for new parents and children?			
Is there a planned program for day-to-day activities?			
Do educators interact and play with the children?			
Do the educators spend time talking to and encouraging the children?			
Do children appear to be relaxed, happy and playing cooperatively?			
Are there a wide range of toys and books supplied for the children?			
Are you welcome to visit at anytime?			
Do toileting, nappy changing and rest times meet individual needs?			
Do snacks and meal times meet individual needs?			
Do you feel welcome to discuss your child and their policies?			

5 FAMILY DAY CARE

People and environment *cont.*	YES	NO	N/A
Do the educators have similar thoughts on discipline to your own?			
Are cultural differences recognised and accepted?			
Will your child's individual needs be met?			
What is the procedure for handling complaints against educators?			
Do you feel a warm caring relationship will be developed with the educator and your child?			
Will this arrangement contribute positively to your child's total well being?			

Scheme & Co-ordination Unit Support	YES	NO	N/A
Which scheme is the educator registered with?			
Do they provide regular and spontaneous visits from trained and knowledgeable coordinators?			
Does the unit support and provide resources, training and mentoring to the educator?			
Are alternative care arrangements available when required - back-up care, emergency care?			
Is there support services eg transport, play sessions, toy library, access to specialised funding			
Do snacks and meal times meet individual needs?			

5 FAMILY DAY CARE

National Quality Standards	YES	NO	N/A
Do the educators have similar thoughts on discipline to your own?			
Are cultural differences recognised and accepted?			
Will your child's individual needs be met?			
What is the procedure for handling complaints against educators?			
Do you feel a warm caring relationship will be developed with the educator and your child?			
Will this arrangement contribute positively to your child's total well being?			

Scheme & Co-ordination Unit Support	YES	NO	N/A
Has the service been assessed under the National Quality Framework?			
If so what was the rating?			
Does the service have a Quality Improvement Plan? Can you view the plan?			

For a printable version of this checklist click here.



Six

Nannies, Au Pairs & Babysitter

WHAT IS A NANNY?



A Nanny is employed by the family on either a live-in or live-out basis to undertake all tasks related to the care of children. Duties are generally restricted to child care and the domestic tasks related to child care. A Nanny may or may not have had any formal training though often has a good deal of actual experience. A nanny's working week ranges from forty to sixty hours per week.

A Nanny arrangement can include:

- Live In Nanny – a nanny who lives in your home
- Live Out Nanny – a nanny that comes to your house each day
- Nanny Share – the nanny works for two families either at different times or cares for both sets of children at the same time

6 NANNIES, AU PAIRS & BABYSITTERS

The Advantages & Disadvantages of a nanny

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Individual attention for your child. One-on-one care is especially important for children under one.	Can be expensive compared with other child care if you have one child.
Consistent care from one person.	Child may miss out on daily social interactions if there are no regular play dates and outings.
Generally a professional child carer, with relevant qualifications.	You will need to arrange back-up care if the nanny is ill, takes holidays or leaves.
Hours are flexible, depending on your contract agreement.	If you employ a nanny directly, rather than use an agency, you will be responsible for wages, tax, superannuation etc. Read about **your obligations for employing a nanny**.
Child stays in own home and familiar environment. Routines do not have to change. No need to travel and less exposure to illness.	You may feel you lose some privacy and space with a live-in nanny sharing your home.
You can have more say in child care as nanny is your direct employee.	

How to find a nanny?

- Nanny Agencies - while it is possible to find child care independently, using an agency can make the process easier and less time consuming by taking away a lot of the leg work involved in advertising for and interviewing potential candidates. Use our **guide** on how to use an agency to assist you further.
- Advertising – place an ad in your local paper detailing your child care needs
- Network – speak to other parents to see if they know of any nannies who are available in your area although this maybe difficult as parents tend to keep good babysitters and nannies to themselves for fear of losing them

To find agency screened nannies operating in your area click here



Interviewing a nanny

Our **Interviewing a Nanny or Au Pair Checklist** has been developed to help with interviewing a potential nanny. It covers off on security, safety and questions for specific age ranges.

Cost

Nannies are entitled to the minimum rates of pay detailed in the **Miscellaneous Award pay rate guide**. Rates vary, depending on the capacity the nanny is engaged in (e.g. full-time, part-time or casual) and when they're working (e.g. weekdays, weekends or public holidays), but on average, you can expect to pay $30-$45 per hour for a live-in or high end live-out nanny (+agency fee and super if applicable).

Other useful information

We have developed a handy guide to provide parents with information on the **obligations when employing a nanny**, also including a **sample employment contract** to assist in creating an employment contract for a Nanny. The guide can be printed out, along with a **Nanny/Parent Diary** that is useful to keep lines of communication open and keep you up-to-date with your child's development.

6 NANNIES, AU PAIRS & BABYSITTERS

WHAT IS AN AU PAIR?

Most Australian parents looking for someone to care for their children have heard of nannies, fewer have heard of au pairs. Typically, an au pair is a young, single person from overseas who wants to come to Australia to learn English and live as a member of an Australian family.

Au pairs can be expected to do a combination of child care and light housework duties in exchange for board and a small allowance. In Australia, au pairs are given a 12 month Working Holiday Visa, placements can last for the duration of the visa however some au pairs may want to travel for a few months at the end.

It is important to note that au pairs are not trained nannies and may have little or no training. They should not be left in sole charge of babies younger than 12 months. However, once both the parents and the au pair have confidence in the arrangement children older than 12 months can be looked after for a few hours at a time.

In families with school-aged children, au pairs are mostly used for before and after school care. Where there are young children in the family the au pair may also work a few hours during the day.

Daily responsibilities

The responsibilities of an au pair will depend on the age of the children and the nature of the household and a daily timetable should be worked out to take into account time commitments on both sides of the relationship. More than 80 per cent of the au pair's daily tasks should revolve around the direct care of the children in the family and the remaining 20 per cent can be used for light housekeeping duties.

While each family will have a different schedule a typical daily timetable for an au pair might look something like this:

- Wake children in the morning
- Help the children wash and dress for school or day care
- Help children make their bed and clean their room
- Prepare breakfast for the children
- Prepare lunches for the children
- Drive children to school or day care
- While children are at school complete light household tasks such as children's laundry or weekly vacuuming

- Pick up children from school
- Prepare a healthy afternoon snack for the children
- Drive the children to after school activities and pick them up
- Help the children with their homework
- Bathe the children and get them ready for bed

Au pairs should be given time every day to study and pursue their own interests. They should also be given a set amount of time off work each week. In Australia, the most common arrangement is for au pairs to work 30 to 35 hours per week with weekends off work. When a family asks their au pair to work a Saturday, she (or he) should be given the following Monday off work in lieu.

Settling In

When considering the possibility of taking in an au pair it is important to see the placement as a cross cultural experience which will be of benefit to the whole family. If you are simply looking for help around the house then an au pair is not the right choice to make.

The initial settling in period is a very important time for both the family and the au pair. Au pairs are often young and away from home for the first time. They are not trained house cleaners or nannies and may feel lonely and uncomfortable in the first few weeks.

To make this period as easy as possible, your au pair should be welcomed from the outset and included in as many family activities as possible. Be prepared to spend plenty of time in the first weeks helping your au pair become accustomed to life in their new home this may include:

- Making the au pair feel comfortable by creating an occasion of their arrival
- Making the au pair's room pleasant and welcoming
- Giving a tour of the house and clearly explaining house rules
- Providing clear instructions about the au pair's duties and offer feedback
- Offering friendship and patience as the au pair becomes familiar with their new life

An important part of ensuring that your relationship with your au pair is successful is to treat them as an addition to the household. The success of the arrangement relies on flexibility and goodwill on both sides. Your au pair has come to Australia to experience a new culture and improve their language skills and will appreciate being spoken

6 NANNIES, AU PAIRS & BABYSITTERS

to in English and having their mistakes explained. It is a relationship which will strengthen in an environment of openness and understanding.

Use our handy search service to find an au pair in your area.



A Note on Demi Pairs

Demi pairs are young people from overseas who attend language classes during the day. As such they have less time to assist with child care and more basic language skills. Typically, demi pairs help families with older children with after school care (from 3:00pm until 7:00pm).

Responsibilities may include:

- Picking children up from school
- Driving children to their after school activities
- Preparing afternoon snacks
- Helping children with homework
- Preparing and serving children's dinner
- Bathing children and preparing them for bed

Demi pairs work a maximum of 20 hours per week and usually they only take four to six month placements with families because of their language courses. In Australia, demi pairs are currently only available in the major cities.

HOW TO USE AN AGENCY TO FIND A NANNY, AU PAIR OR BABYSITTER?

While it is possible to find child care independently, using an agency can make the process easier and less time consuming by taking away a lot of the leg work involved in advertising for and interviewing potential candidates.

There are many advantages to using an agency to source a nanny, au pair or babysitter such as:

- A good agency saves you time by using tried and tested processes for advertising, recruiting, and screening carers.
- Agencies have established policies regarding things like placement and billing.
- Established agencies with good reputations attract high quality carers which improves the choices for families looking for child care.
- A good agency should be able to source a carer who matches your family and your specific requirements.
- Agencies can assist with the interviewing and recruitment process by providing information on which questions to ask and how to make your final decision.
- Agencies can help you write an employment contract covering things like salary, hours and leave entitlements.
- Good agencies will maintain regular contact with families to ensure they are satisfied with the arrangement and to collect feedback on the carer.
- Agencies can mediate between both parties in the case of disagreement.



6 NANNIES, AU PAIRS & BABYSITTERS

Finding an Agency

Finding an agency you are happy with is the first step in the process. When contacting prospective agencies make sure you ask lots of questions and think about whether you are happy with the answers. Ask to see agency references and make sure to ask about the costs involved.

You might like to ask some of the questions provided below before you make a final decision on which agency to use:

- How long has this agency been operating? What is the Director's background?
- Does the agency have written references which you can read? This is helpful to ask if the agency is new.
- How and where does this agency source its carers?
- What qualifications and experience are carers required to hold to belong to this agency?
- Do all carers hold first aid certificates?
- Does this agency offer carers the opportunity to up-skill through training courses and other educational opportunities?
- What is this agency's screening process? How do you conduct police and reference checks?
- Can I come in and meet someone from the agency to discuss my family's requirements?
- How will you match my family with the right carer for us?
- What help will this agency provide to ensure we make the best possible choice and ask the right questions during the interview process?
- What happens if the carer doesn't work out?
- Can you help us write an employment contract and provide information on our obligations as an employer?
- Do you use service level agreements to ensure a high level of care is maintained for the duration of the contract?
- Can we contact the agency if we are having any problems with our carer and will you stay in touch in the long term?
- What advice can it give parents about employment law and their responsibilities and risks as an employer?
- What do you charge?

6 NANNIES, AU PAIRS & BABYSITTERS

Agencies can charge widely different fees so make sure you understand the costs involved and what they cover. There will also be variations in cost depending on whether you are looking for a full time nanny or an occasional babysitter. Look out for:

- A registration fee: Agencies sometimes charge a registration fee to cover themselves in the case of families sourcing a carer from somewhere else. Essentially it guarantees an agency payment for any time spent working on a placement even if the placement doesn't go ahead.
- A placement fee: This is the fee you pay to the agency once you have employed a carer sourced by the agency. Agencies charge different amounts and have different terms of payment so make sure you ask about these when you contact them.
- Rates of pay: This is what you pay the carer and will depend on conditions under which they employed. It will vary depending on the type of care you require and the qualifications and experience of the carer.

To ensure the relationship you have with your agency is an effective partnership you will need to communicate your needs and expectations as clearly as possible.

As you know, the main reason for using an agency to find child care is to find a match between your family and a carer. Therefore it seems logical to expect that both parties should be interviewed in some detail before a placement occurs. Be wary of agencies that only conduct a brief telephone-based interview with you as they may not understand your family's needs all that well.

To make an informed choice about which agency to use **contact a number of agencies** and compare their policies, procedures, fees and manner towards you. The best choice you can make is an agency which promptly provides you with the information you need to make a decision. Try not to make your final choice until you have all this information to hand and you are comfortable with an agency's approach to your requests.

Agencies can charge widely different fees so make sure you understand the costs involved





6 NANNIES, AU PAIRS & BABYSITTERS

WHAT ARE YOUR OBLIGATIONS WHEN YOU EMPLOY A NANNY?

At Care For Kids we receive many questions from families about the best way to employ a nanny.

The guide below offers information on your key responsibilities and includes a **sample employment contract** and a **Nanny/Parent Diary** which you may find helpful for keeping the lines of communication open.

Hiring a nanny

We recommend that you take a business approach to the hiring of a nanny, at the core of which is establishing a contract of employment. Such an agreement should limit misunderstandings regarding employment conditions, making sure that all parties are on the same page now and in the future.

Nannies fall under the **Miscellaneous Award**. They are in an employment relationship, working in a private home, and perform tasks in caring for children which include preparing meals, planning educational and play-based activities, and doing light housework.

You can view the pay rates specified by the Miscellaneous Award here.

According to the Fair Work Commission, your obligations and responsibilities as the employer of a nanny depends on your specific relationship. Nannies are usually hired as employees, however, under some circumstances, they can be classified as independent contractors.

If you're unsure of the difference or which arrangement will work best for you, then have a think about your situation and refer to the Fair Work Ombudsman's **Independent contractors page**, which explains the difference between independent contractors and employees.



Employment contract

Areas covered in the employment contract between you and your nanny can include salary, benefits, hours of work, main duties and responsibilities, sickness and holiday entitlements, notice period and performance reviews.

Salary

- Set down the agreed salary including $___ pay per week/month/hour
- What is the pay period and when will your nanny be paid?
- What is the method of payment? For example, cheque, cash or into a nominated bank account?
- What is the overtime rate that will apply?
- As mentioned above, nannies are entitled to the Miscellaneous Award rates of pay, which as of 1 July 2021 start at $20.33 per hour for full-time and part-time workers or $29.48 an hour for casual workers.

Hours of work

- Set out the expected hours of work. For example, Monday to Thursday, 7:30am to 6:00pm.
- Agree on public holiday entitlements. If the nanny is expected to work on public holidays, agree on the rate of pay or whether it is time off in lieu. Under the Award, the minimum rate for public holidays is $50.83 per hour for full-time, part-time and casual workers, but you and your nanny can agree to a flexibility clause and negotiate your own arrangement.

Reference and background checks

We strongly recommend you conduct a background check on any prospective nanny to ensure they are suitable to provide care for your child.

For further information please see our article **Working with children checks** which outlines the various legal requirements and resources available to you in each state and territory.

The decision and responsibility of hiring any carer rests with you. Be sure you have the facts regarding previous employment, criminal records, driving records, immigration and visa status so that you can make the most informed decision possible.

6 NANNIES, AU PAIRS & BABYSITTERS

Duties / parenting philosophy

Ensure you are specific about the nanny's responsibilities. Provide clear information about your family's routines, including nap and feeding times, weekly activities and so on.

Include plenty of information about your parenting philosophy, including information on disciplinary measures, TV time, sleeping methods, nutrition, hygiene and safety.

Spelling it out beforehand will minimise the potential for misunderstandings and disagreements down the track. Ensure you are available to discuss any changes with your nanny as they come up.

Leave entitlements

- Determine the **annual leave entitlement**. All full-time and part-time employees are entitled to four weeks of paid annual leave, based on their ordinary hours of work (e.g. if they usually work 20 hours a week, they'll accumulate 80 hours of holiday pay)
- Determine the **sick and carer's leave entitlement**. All employees except casuals are entitled to paid sick and carer's leave. The yearly entitlement, based on ordinary hours of work, is 10 days for full-time employees and pro-rata for part-time employees.
- Set down notification times for when the nanny is to contact you by if they are sick and conversely set down a procedure in the event of you being delayed.

Income tax

Depending on the nature of your employment contract, you may need to register with the Australian Taxation Office and **withhold tax** from payments you make to your employee nanny. For further information visit **ATO.gov.au**. The ATO says you do not need to withhold money if you pay a nanny agency, which pays your nanny as a third party. Nannies hired as independent contractors will be responsible for maintaining their own tax affairs.

Superannuation

If the nanny works for you for over 30 hours per week and you pay them $450 or more (before tax) in wages per month they are entitled to **superannuation**.

The **current rate** of superannuation is 10 per cent of the employee's gross wage. For more information, visit the ATO or contact the ATO's Superannuation Hotline 13 10 20 (weekdays, 8am to 6pm).

Payroll services

If you are unclear how payroll works, consider using an external service to help you pay your nanny's salary. There are many available in the market. Here are a few you may wish to consider **Domestic Payroll**, **CarePayCo** or **JustFamilyPayroll**

Domestic work cover insurance

Insurance to cover your nanny in the event of an accident is a further consideration. Legislation on insurance requirements varies between the different States and Territories.

For information on the insurance requirements in your area click on the links below:

New South Wales
Queensland
South Australia
Tasmania
Victoria
Western Australia
Australian Capital Territory
Northern Territory

Automobile and other insurance

If the nanny has use of your car, make arrangements to include them under your policy. Check to ensure that compulsory third party insurance also covers third party property damage. If your nanny is under 25 years of age, you should check what additional provisions need to be made to cover them under your policy.

You may also wish to request that your nanny have additional insurance. Policies available for nannies can be obtained from **Nannysure.**



6 NANNIES, AU PAIRS & BABYSITTERS



Additional expenses

Any additional out of pocket expenses should be agreed upon. It's a good idea to set aside an additional cash amount each week to cover outings, snacks, excursions, swimming classes etc.

If the nanny will be using their own car for work related tasks then an allowance to cover fuel costs and additional wear and tear on the car should also be set down.

A log book should be established to record kilometres travelled in the course of their duty.

Ask your nanny to check their insurance policy to ensure appropriate cover for transportation of your children.

Notice period

Agree on a notice period including any arrangement for payment in lieu of notice. The standard notice period is generally two to four weeks.

Probation salary & performance reviews

Conduct regular salary and performance reviews. Set down the times for a performance review. For example, after the 3 month probation period, have another review at 6 months followed by a 12 month salary and performance review.

Consider a mediation procedure for any issues or grievances that need to be raised throughout the period of employment.

Contract review and/or amendments

In the event of the birth of another child, both parties should discuss the continued employment arrangements, including a review of the current employment contract.

Communication

Many nannies cite poor communication as the reason for leaving a family, so take time at the beginning and the end of each day to debrief with the nanny. If this isn't possible, introduce a diary system, which allows the nanny to record the events of the day including appointments, meals, social outings, sleep times and medications as well as the child's developmental steps.

Consider a weekly review which involves an informal discussion allowing both parties to give and receive feedback.

Provide positive feedback and praise for a job well done; conversely, if you are unhappy in any way with the nanny's performance, discuss this immediately.

Click here for an example of a diary system you could introduce.

Confidentiality

It is also important to consider a confidentiality agreement to ensure that the affairs of the household are kept private.

An example of a confidentiality agreement:

The employee shall keep the affairs and concerns of the household and it's transactions and business confidential. It is a condition of employment that except as required by Law, the employee shall not disclose confidential information to any persons whatsoever without the consent in writing of the employer. This provision shall apply for all time and survives expiration or earlier termination of this Agreement. The operation of this clause shall not apply to information disclosed to medical or other health professionals in the course of obtaining treatment for the child(ren).

6 NANNIES, AU PAIRS & BABYSITTERS

Other benefits

Look at longer-term benefits to make the job as attractive and enjoyable as possible.

Benefits you may wish to consider include:

- Good living quarters (if applicable)
- Use of a car
- Occasional late starts and early finishes
- Cash bonuses
- Health cover
- The occasional token of gratitude such as night out, movie tickets, pamper pack

All of the research about early care and education leads to one overriding conclusion - quality matters.

To get started and put your Nanny Employment Contract together click here for an example contract you can use as a guide.

If your nanny is a trusted and valued employee whom you wish to retain, then these incentives can go a long way in improving staff retention.

Help to keep lines of communication open with your Nanny - print out this useful Nanny/Parent Diary.

Many nannies cite poor communication as the reason for leaving a family

RETAINING YOUR NANNY/AU PAIR

Now that you have found a nanny or au pair to look after your children it's important to think about retaining them for as long as you can.

Here are some top tips to keep your nanny for as long as you and your children need them for.

Contract of Employment

Take a business approach to the hiring of a nanny. Establish a contract of employment either formally in writing or verbally through open discussion. This should include salary, benefits, hours of work, main duties and responsibilities, sickness and holiday entitlements, notice period and disciplinary issues. If the contract is in writing it should be signed by both parties.

Induction

Set precedents by making sure your house is in order and the way you would like to see it on your return home. Take time to run through the instructions of the household, children's social activities and any special dietary or medical requirements. Make clear your views on discipline and the weekly routine that you wish to be followed. Detail this in writing if you wish so that the nanny has a copy for future reference.

If possible ease the nanny into her new environment and try to work from home for a few days while your children and nanny get used to the routine and each other.

Take a leading role in the initial phase and then gradually move to observing and then withdraw and let the nanny get on with her job.

Communication

Many nannies cite poor communication as the reason for leaving a family, so take time at the beginning and the end of each day to discuss the children. If this isn't possible introduce a diary system which allows the nanny to record the events of the day, note appointments, meals, social outings, sleep times and medications.

Put in place a weekly review. An informal discussion which allows both parties to give and receive feedback. Provide positive feedback and praise

6 NANNIES, AU PAIRS & BABYSITTERS



for a job well done; conversely if you are unhappy in any way with the nannies performance discuss this immediately.

Consider conducting an appraisal every six months as an extension of your weekly review to discuss overall performance.

Salary and Conditions

Know your obligations as an employer with regard to salary, superannuation and insurance and look at longer-term benefits to make the job as attractive and enjoyable as possible. Benefits you may wish to consider include:

- Good living quarters (if applicable) supply good furnishings TV, CD, Video, Own Phone, Mobile Phone
- Use of a car
- Occasional late starts and early finishes
- Cash Bonuses
- Night out, Movie Tickets, Pampering Package, Weekend away

These small extras will make your nanny feel appreciated and will increase your chances of retaining them in the long term.



Seven Outside School Hours Care

AN OVERVIEW OF OOSH CARE

What do you do when the school day has finished, but your working day hasn't? How do you keep your child busy during the holidays? The answer for many working parents of school aged children is Out of School Hours Care (OOSH).

OOSH is supervised care and recreation for primary school-age children:

- Before and after school
- On pupil-free days
- During school holidays (vacation care)

OOSH care is usually associated with schools and caters to primary school children. Most OOSH services are operated by community and private organisations and the government's program is known as Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) or Vacation Care (VC).

Typical hours for OOSH services are:

Before school	Commencing from 6.30 am – 9.00 am
After school	3.00 pm – 6.00 pm
Vacation	7.00 am – 6.00 pm each week day

How much does before and after school care cost?

Costs of OOSH care vary, but typical fees for before and after school care range from $15 to $30 per morning session and $25 to $45 per afternoon session. You may expect to pay anything from $60 plus for vacation care programs.

There may also be additional charges such as fees for:

- Annual membership for the centre or organisation
- Late collection
- Excursions and special outings during holidays

7 OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS CARE

What will my child do at OOSH care?

Out of School Hours care emphasises play, social interaction and recreation. Activities are organised in small and large groups, or children may choose quiet time by themselves (eg to read and do homework).



Some typical activities include:

- Art and craft
- Cooking
- Drama
- Dance
- Games
- Music
- Reading
- Sport



Other options for OOSH care:

If you missed out on a spot in your school's OOSH service then you may like to consider these options:

- Arrange a routine with your employer and partner for days when your child has sport and music activities. For example, you may need to start work early so you can leave earlier to take your child to their after school activity.
- Hire a student. High school and university students could look after your child to earn some extra cash, especially during holidays. Find out if your regular student babysitter can help with after school or vacation care. Ask around among your friends and colleagues, or see if you can advertise at a local campus.
- 'Time share' with other parents during school holidays. Arrange a roster for care, with each parent taking turns to look after the children for a day. If you can't manage a whole day then organise a series of 'play dates' for a few hours.
- Enrol your child in a holiday program. There are many holiday programs available, ranging from daily activities run by council and community centres to week-long camps. Libraries, museums and sporting organisations also run holiday activities. Investigate and book early as vacation care places are limited.

Out of School Hours care lets your child have fun in a relaxed and safe environment. Many school-aged children enjoy having time to hang out with their friends after hours and most enjoy the range of activities on offer.

Use our before and after school care search to find OOSH services and our vacation care search to find care in your local area.

Out of School Hours care lets your child have fun in a relaxed and safe environment

7 OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS CARE

HOW TO CHOOSE THE RIGHT OOSH CARE PROVIDER

When you are choosing OOSH services, think about:

- Location. How will my child travel to and from school to the OOSH service?
- Cost. What are the fees charged, and what do they include?
- Availability. How far ahead do I need to book? Are places available when I need them?
- Staff. What qualifications and/or experience do the staff have?

You should also consider your child's needs and interests:

- Are the children made to feel welcome by the staff and other children?
- Can I talk to staff about my child's needs and activities offered?
- Do the activities suit my child's interests? If my child doesn't want to join in organised activities, is there supervised free play?
- Is the environment suitable and interesting?
- Is homework supervised?
- Are any meals provided? Do they cater to special dietary needs (eg allergies)?
- Other considerations. Do they administer medication? Do they have a television and is it supervised?



MANAGING COMPLAINTS WITH YOUR OOSH PROVIDER

Out of School Hours (OOSH) care is supervised care for school aged children before and after school, on teacher's only days and during school holidays.

OOSH care is aimed at primary school aged children and the services are usually run by community and private organisations. For more information on what you can expect from OOSH care check out **'An overview of out of school hours (OOSH) and vacation care'**.

Children in OOSH care tend to be older than children in other forms of care however, problems can still arise and it is worth knowing how to deal with an issue before one arises.

OOSH care providers are obliged to operate with a complaints management policy, ask to see a copy of the policy when you first take your child along to meet the carers. Familiarise yourself with how the policy works and ask questions about anything which is unclear.



7 OUTSIDE SCHOOL HOURS CARE

The Network of Community Activities, a group which coordinates and runs OOSH care programmes, offers the following procedure for parents to follow in the case of problems:

Grievance Procedure

If you feel your rights are not being respected, or if you have any other complaint or concerns about the centre please:

1. Talk to the OOSH Coordinator in person or phone.
2. Talk with the OOSH management Committee Chairperson.
3. Talk to the Sponsor Body/ Organisation Supervisor.
4. If you are not satisfied with the outcome of these discussions, or felt your rights were not respected, then contact a member of the Sponsor Body/Organisation Manager/ Management Committee or place your complaint in writing and send it to any of the above people.
5. If you are still not satisfied, after following the steps outlined above, contact the Ombudsman in your State or Territory.

Remember the best way to deal with an issue is to tackle it straight away, so always talk to your child's carer or their manager before you do anything else. No matter how angry or upset you are, try and take a positive problem-solving approach to the conversation as this is more likely to help you get the outcome you are hoping for.



Care for kids



Eight

Child Care and Work



8 CHILD CARE AND WORK

RETURNING TO WORK – THINGS TO CONSIDER

In the past decade, several studies researched the effects of employment on children. Conclusions clearly identified quality of care and quality of the parent/child relationship as the two most significant influences.

In order to feel secure, children need to feel an attachment to the adults who care for them. Avoid situations in which your child will be asked to change care personnel more than once per year. Ideally, younger children benefit from even longer relationships.

Emotional attachment to another adult carer is a key process for your child's emotional health. The relationship between your child and his or her carer is an important one, but rest assured that quality care is no substitute for the value of your primary parent-child bond.

Things to consider:

- There should be a good 'match' between the child's temperament and needs and the carer's ability to meet them
- Look for a small ratio of carers to children. For preschool-age children, it's ideal to have no more than four children to one carer
- It is ideal to look for a relationship with the potential for a continuous, strong and positive relationship between carer and child
- Ask if the staff has been trained in health, safety (CPR) and child development

Additional Considerations:

- Take time to observe your child's interactions with a carer
- Periodically, drop in unannounced to see how your child is experiencing the care situation
- Develop open and regular communication with your child's carer
- Evaluate your child's ability to feel safe, be appropriately challenged, play and learn on an ongoing basis

Ensuring quality in the Parent/Child relationship

Every child needs to know there is at least one person who is looking out for their best interests. The quality of the parent/child relationship depends on your children's belief and trust in your capacity to care for, protect and have their best interests at heart.

HELPING YOUR CHILD ADJUST TO CARE

You've just started your child in care. It's the first day however things go wrong and your child protests loudly when it's time for you to say good bye.

Many children experience anxiety when starting a new child care arrangement but there is plenty you can do to make the transition as stress free as possible for you and your child.

Here are a few tips:

- Prepare your child by talking to them in advance, tell them where they will be going, what they will be doing.
- Take your child to visit the provider or carer's home on a few occasions before you need to leave them for the first time. Show your child where they will be going. Answer any questions they may have openly and honestly reassuring them that everything is OK.
- Arrive at least 15 minutes ahead of time so that you can help your child to settle into an activity before you have to head off to work. They are less likely to protest your departure if they are having fun and involved with an activity.
- Familiar objects such as a favourite stuffed animal or security blanket should be on hand. Your child may find it easier to adjust to a particular care situation having a favoured toy to hold when feeling anxious or upset.
- Try and allocate enough time so you aren't rushing to sign in and settle your child into an activity.
- Pay attention to your own body language when saying good bye to your child. If you're feeling uncertain about the new arrangement you could be conveying some of your own anxiety to your child.
- Resist the temptation to sneak out the door while your child isn't looking. You'll simply create more problems for both of you. Fearing that you're going to disappear again, your child may become unwilling to let you out of sight for a minute – even when you are at home.
- If your child reacts strongly see if your partner or a trusted friend can drop the child off instead. They might actually be protesting your departure more than the particular child care environment.

8 CHILD CARE AND WORK



- Ask your child's carer if they can provide insights about the problem. For instance maybe the child doesn't like one of the other children in the group or is having difficulty settling down for an afternoon nap.
- Consistency is important so stick to a routine. Avoid making other changes to your child's routine while getting used to a new child care arrangement. For example this would not be a good time to move them from a cot to a bed.
- Accept the fact that it takes time for young children to adjust to a new child care setting and some children take longer than others.
- Be alert to the possibility of an underlying problem. If your child hasn't settled into his arrangement after a couple of weeks, it may just be a poor choice for your child. This doesn't necessarily mean that abuse is occurring. The problem could be something as simple as a personality conflict between your child and a caregiver.

SINGLE PARENTS & CHILD CARE

Halfway through 2021, the **Australian Bureau of Statistics** counted 1.1 million single parent families, equating to 15 per cent of all Australian families.

Single parent families face many of the challenges of two parent families but additional issues are common such as increased financial pressure, time constraints and increased stress, anxiety and guilt surrounding parenting.

Following a separation, most newly single parents have no choice to stay at home, as they assume the role of breadwinner. For parents already back at work and using care this may be less of a challenge than for parents who haven't yet returned to work.

The key requirement for many single parent families looking for care is flexibility.



8 CHILD CARE AND WORK

Child Care Centres represent a great option if your work hours are fairly predictable and you can guarantee that you'll be able to pick up and drop off within the designated hours. However, if work shifts have an unpredictable schedule you may need to consider a more flexible type of care which are listed below.

Family day care early childhood education and care for your child in a qualified provider's home. FDC is often more affordable and more family focused than child care centres. As care is offered in the carer's home there is often a high degree of flexibility with some providers offering extended hours, over night and even weekend care.

Nannies and **babysitters** offer flexible care which could be used in combination with child care centres or family day care to fill in the gaps around operating hours. However, this can be expensive, especially when used casually and babysitters are not eligible for the **Child Care Subsidy.** Nannies may attract the CCS if they're a registered provider.

Au pairs are a great option if you have space to accommodate them. It's important to remember that au pairs are not formally trained and should not be left in sole charge of babies under 12 months old. Because they live in, au pairs can be a huge help with out of hours activities such as shopping, dentist appointments as well as providing a better means of juggling more than one child's extracurricular activities.

Nanny share is a more affordable way to have a nanny.

- Ask friends, neighbours and parents in local playgroups if they are interested in sharing a nanny.
- Ask other parents at your workplace about nanny sharing. At some workplaces, there may be resources to help you find child care, including nanny sharing.
- Use our **nanny search** to find a nanny in your local area or **contact an agency** who provides nanny sharing services.

If you decide to DIY ensure you vet the nannies for qualifications, references and police checks.

Following a separation, most newly single parents have no choice to stay at home

8 CHILD CARE AND WORK



In Home Care is government funded care which is available for people who require more flexible care than that offered by available providers. If you or your child have an illness or disability or live in rural or remote areas and/or work shifts, you may be eligible so it's definitely worth exploring.

Parent sharing is great for after school and child care pick-ups. If you only work part time or can be more flexible on some days than others, it's worth discussing with other parents in your child care centre, preschool or school, who either work part time themselves or also have flexibility. If you can work out your days across the week, so that all kids are covered for pick-ups between you, it can be a very sociable, cheap and rewarding way to make sure you have general and emergency child care covered.

Financial government support is available to help sole parents with the cost of child care. Depending on your circumstances you may be eligible for:

- **Child Care Subsidy** which can help with the cost of early childhood services such as long day care, family day care and outside school hours care
- **Additional Child Care Subsidy - Transition to Work** which is an additional subsidy to support people who are transitioning from some income support payments to work
- **Additional Child Care Subsidy – Temporary Financial Hardship** which is a payment to help those who've experienced recent financial hardships (e.g. after the death of a partner or loss of employment) and are having trouble paying child care fees.
- **Family Tax Benefit Part A and Part B** are also available to help sole parent families with the cost of raising children

The right to request flexible work arrangements

Juggling work and family responsibilities is complicated enough in two parent families, and even more so for sole parents. If you are struggling to balance out the competing pressures in your life you could talk to your employer about flexible work options.

8 CHILD CARE AND WORK

The Fair Work Act 2009 provides employees within the national workplace relations system the right to request to work flexibly. To be eligible, you must have worked for your employer on a full- or part-time basis for 12 months or longer, and long term casuals may also be eligible to apply.

Popular flexible work arrangements include:

- Changing start and finish times to coincide with school drop off/pick up
- Part-time work or job share
- Working longer hours over fewer days
- Working from home
- Working additional hours to compensate for time off

Parents of school age children or younger are eligible to apply in writing and all employers must seriously consider a request for flexible work arrangements.

Employers can refuse the request on reasonable business grounds, such as it would be too costly for them or there is no capacity to change the arrangements of other employees to meet the request, and the outcome of the request must be responded to in writing within 21 days of the request first being made.

An increasing number of organisations are becoming aware of the benefits of implementing measures to enable employees to balance their work and family commitments. Documented benefits include improved staff retention, increased productivity, lower absenteeism, improved employee satisfaction and loyalty, and for organisations, these variables mean an improvement in the bottom line in terms of increased profits and decreased costs.

For these reasons it is worth talking to your employer about working flexibly. Chances are, there are many other people within your organisation who have been considering it and as the old saying goes, it doesn't hurt to ask!

For lots of helpful information, including tips on how to write a letter to your employer to request flexible work arrangements, make sure you read **The Fair Work Ombudsman's Flexible Working Arrangements information.**





8 CHILD CARE AND WORK

CHILD CARE FOR PEOPLE WHO WORK NON-STANDARD HOURS

Looking for high quality child care when and where you need it can be like searching for a needle in a haystack… the challenge is even greater when you work non-standard or extended hours.

The majority of early childhood services operate from 6am-6pm weekdays, however recent figures from the ABS show that the number of people working non-standard hours is rising and more than one in three people work over time, with almost 60 per cent of employees having no say in their start and finish times.

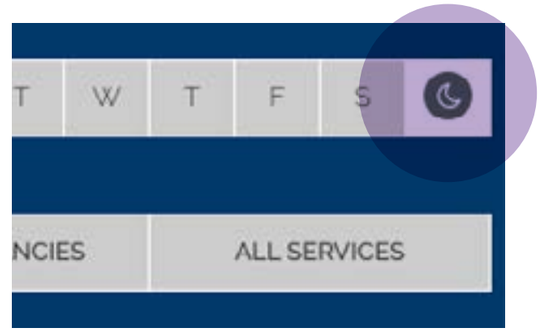
An increasing number of early childhood services offer extended hours care and you can identify these providers on the **CareforKids.com.au** website by the moon icon next to their listing. This article describes weekend, occasional and extended hours care in more detail.

In 2013 the Australian government implemented a series of flexibility trials, which offered a defined group of family day care and long day care providers the opportunity to offer extended hours, flexible, over night and weekend care arrangements to parents who needed it.

The experiment was designed to help shift workers, such as those working in police departments and in hospitals, better balance their family and professional responsibilities.

The trial was cancelled at the beginning of 2014 due to a lack of interest, with parents citing cost and the need for care on an ad-hoc rather than a regular basis as barriers and providers claiming they needed a regular commitment in order to make extended hours care a viable option.

While the trial didn't yield the expected results, extended hours care providers are on the rise and this type of care is becoming easier to find, especially if you live in the city.



Look for the moon icon on the CareforKids website

What options are available?

Family Day Care – family day care is a quality, home based early childhood education and care service for children aged from six weeks through to 12 years. Many family day care educators are more flexible than long day care centres with their hours of operation and can make special accommodations for families with particular care needs.

Search for Family Day Care

Long Day Care (with extended hours) – an increasing number of long day care centres are offering extended hours care, with earlier and later sessions, and this is a great option for families with non-standard start and finish times. Remember to look for the moon icon next to their **CareforKids.com.au** listing when researching your options.

If your service doesn't currently offer extended hours think about approaching them to ask why. It could be that they need a minimum number to make it economically viable. Talking to other families and pinning a notice to canvass support among other parents could help you secure the required numbers.

Search for Long Day Care



Nannies and Au Pairs – a great option for those with odd working hours, if you can arrange a live-in option. The main disadvantage to nannies and au pairs is that you need extra space in your house to accommodate them on a long-term basis and they can be more expensive than group care arrangements.

Search for Nannies or Au Pairs

Babysitters – although some people are now professional babysitters and pretty much operate the same hours and charge the same fees as nannies, babysitters are usually an ad hoc solution to out of hours care. If you have a great babysitter and would like to use their services on a regular basis talk to them about a regular commitment and negotiate a rate of pay which works for both of you.

Search for Babysitters

8 CHILD CARE AND WORK

Occasional, Casual and Flexible Care – this is a flexible service which provides high quality child care on an occasional or ad hoc basis from as little as one hour to a full day. Parents only pay for the time their children are in care. Occasional care centres are family grouped and are licensed for children from birth to five years old. A growing number of established long day care are now also offering parents the option to book casual or occasional care on an as-needs basis.

Search for Occasional, Casual or Flexible Care

In Home Care – this is a flexible form of child care where quality early childhood education and care is provided in the family home by a qualified educator. This type of government-subsidised child care is for families that can't use other mainstream child care options because they:

- Work non-standard or variable hours, or
- Are geographically isolated, or
- Have challenging or complex family needs

You might be eligible for an **In Home Care** place if you meet at least one of the above criteria, are eligible for the **Child Care Subsidy**, and can demonstrate that other types of approved child care services aren't available or appropriate. In Home Care Support Agencies assess families' eligibility and allocate places.

Search for In Home Care

Kid share - another option is to network with colleagues and friends in a similar situation and see if you can negotiate an on-going kid share arrangement where you mind each other's children. Although these arrangements take time to negotiate and the logistics can be complicated to implement, they are cost effective and can work very well in the long-term.

Nannies and Au Pairs are a great option for those with odd working hours

8 CHILD CARE AND WORK

SUCCESSFULLY USING GRANDPARENTS FOR CHILD CARE

With child care places at a premium and the cost of care on the rise, an increasing number of Australian families are looking to grandparents for help with child care. In fact, ABS figures from 2017 show that around one quarter (26 per cent) of all children in child care were usually cared for by their grandparents.

Child care by grandparents offers many benefits, including reduced costs, the chance to build strong bonds between grandparents and grandchildren and the reassurance that comes from knowing a loving and trusted family member is caring for your child.

A recent study from the University of Melbourne has also shown that there might be health benefits for the grandparents!

The study showed that postmenopausal women who take care of their grand-children one day a week had better memory and faster cognitive speed than those who didn't, factors which can lessen the likelihood of someone developing Alzheimer's Disease.

However, it's important to do the groundwork and ensure everyone is on the same page before the child minding arrangement begins as you can't change grandparents as easily as you can change a child care provider!

Is grandparent care really the best choice?

As a new parent or parent-to-be, the first thing you need to do before talking to your parents about child care is make an honest assessment as to whether they will actually provide the best type of care for your family.

Ask yourself:

- Are the grandparents physically up to the job? Can they manage the stroller, the lifting and the physical activity involved in caring for a small child?
- Are the grandparents mentally up to the job? Will they be able to handle the emotional challenges of dealing with a small child?
- Would a regular child care commitment impinge on their lifestyle and personal commitments leading to feelings of resentment?



The last thing you want to do is put your parents under any pressure to care for your child if they are not actually up to the job. This would be bad for your child, bad for your parents and bad for your family's relationship with them.
If you have any doubts about their physical and mental ability to do the job, then you should consider other types of care such as a nanny, family day care or centre based care. A shared care arrangement could also be an option where, for example, the grandparents take your child for one day per week and you use a child care provider for the other days.

If, however, the grandparents are fit and well and up to the challenge then it's time to lay the groundwork!

The first thing you need to do when considering a child care arrangement with grandparents is to sit down together and work out the ground rules of the arrangement. It's important for everyone to have a very clear idea about what is expected.

AS PART OF THIS INITIAL NEGOTIATION YOU SHOULD DISCUSS:

How much care the grandparents will provide:

Will it be a regular weekly arrangement and if so how many days, which days and for how long each day. Long day care providers offer care from 7am until 6pm and if that is your expectation you need to ensure your relative is okay with that.

Where the care will take place:

If it is at your house then you need to allow for travel time and ensure you have adequate supplies of everything to make the job as easy as possible. If the care is at their place then you need to conduct an audit of the house to ensure it is baby proof, provide them with all the necessary supplies, including but not limited to a cot, high chair, nappies, wipes, a car seat, spare clothes, toys and milk or formula.

If/how you will compensate them:

Although some grandparents may be willing to provide child care for free, for others it may be a case of having to stop work in order to do so. In this case you should look at some form of payment. You should also consider a reimbursement or petty cash system for any expenses which come up while the baby is in their care.

If your relative refuses to accept any form of cash payment then you could consider regular treats or gifts such as movie tickets, gift baskets or any items you think they would appreciate. You know how tiring caring for a child is and it is important to keep in mind the generosity of what your family member is doing!

Acknowledging the generation gap

Grandparents have plenty of experience when it comes to raising kids and you are living proof of that! However, parenting involves many personal decisions and you and your relative's ideas on the best ways to bring up the grandkids may not always marry up.

It's normal to expect grandparents to indulge their grandchildren on the odd occasion however, if they are caring for kids on a daily basis then you'll need to establish some ground rules on treats and the routines and philosophies your family adheres to.



8 CHILD CARE AND WORK

Before the care arrangement starts have a frank and fearless exchange of views on subjects such as:

- Food: If you have clear ideas about what and when your child should eat then explain this to your relative. Better still write down a meal plan and stock the fridge with food that supports the meals you have in mind. Grandparents naturally want to treat their grandkids and that is fine but should be on the odd occasion and not daily. If you are worried about your family member's ability to cook, then prepare the food in advance, explain the rules around where the child can eat (High chair? Table? Stroller?) and if and when snacks are permitted and make sure you advise them on any anti-allergy protocols in your house such as no peanuts before 12 months. The thinking and information around allergens will have changed since your relative was a parent.
- Sleep: Is it okay for your child to cat nap in the car or stroller during the day or would you prefer all sleeping happened in the cot? Does your relative know and understand all the safe sleeping guidelines? Would you like your relative to wake the child up after a certain amount of sleep to ensure they sleep at night? Is your baby allowed a dummy at nap time? Does your baby sleep at certain times or do you have an "anything goes" approach to the issue of sleep? Whatever the procedure is in your family you need to be explicit and direct with your relative.
- Discipline: Although this won't be so much of an issue for grandparents minding infants it will certainly turn into an issue as the child grows. If you are the parent of a very young baby it will help galvanise your thinking about discipline to have a conversation with your family member, even if it isn't actually relevant just now. Be clear about your warning system, whether or not you use physical punishment, what words you would prefer they use when dealing with tantrums and how you would like them to reward good

It is important to keep in mind the generosity of what your family member is doing

behaviour. Discipline can be a very divisive issue and one you should aim to be consistent on. If compromise is necessary to ensure a consistent approach, then you should seriously consider taking that direction.

- Crying: Another issue which can divide wholly invested parents and family members is how long you should leave a child to cry before going in to soothe him or her. If your family favours attachment parenting then no crying will be tolerated, if however, you are sleep training you may accept crying as a part of the process. You and your relative may sit on opposite ends of the spectrum when it comes to crying and if that is the case then you will need to explain your point of view and the reasons for it as clearly and directly as possible. If your relative's views are strongly held then you will need to consider their opinions and experience as well. Finding a middle ground will be the best way of ensuring your philosophy is adhered to as closely as possible.
- Activities: Gone are the days when it was considered acceptable for children to be plonked down in front of the TV for hours at a time. If you have strong ideas about how you want your child to be spending their time then make it happen, write a list of possible activities the relative could do on a daily/weekly basis (story time, park visits, beach trips etc.), sign your child and carer up for classes, provide a box of age appropriate toys, activities and books, arrange play dates and play groups and so on.
- Downtime: It's reasonable to expect your relative to have some downtime during the day. If they have regular commitments or chores that need to be done, then check it's okay to take your child along. It's reasonable to expect them to get on with their life in the same way you would if you were home, as long it doesn't interfere with the responsibilities of caring for your child. If your relative naps at the same time as your child, then provide them with a baby monitor to ensure they can hear the baby wake up.

Whatever you decide, keep in mind the fact that your relative has a lot of valuable experience and the simple fact that you are comfortable with them potentially looking after your child suggests that you probably have some parenting philosophies in common.

8 CHILD CARE AND WORK

Relinquishing control is hard to do as a parent but is something which will pay off and as long as you maintain good lines of communication with your family member then the care arrangement should be successful.

If and when disagreements come up, try not to sweat the small stuff. Focus on maintaining a warm, loving and consistent approach and accept that even if you and your relative do some things differently, as long as you both have the child's best interests at heart, then your child will thrive.

According to **Dummies.com**, a recent study found that 20 percent of grandparents who are responsible for caring for young children 30 or more hours a week meet the criteria for clinical depression.



If you notice your family member displaying any of the symptoms below you should at least consider the possibility that they are depressed:

- Persistent sad, anxious, or “flat” mood
- Feelings of hopelessness or pessimism
- Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, and helplessness
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities that were once enjoyed, including spending time with the grandchildren
- Decreased energy or fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions
- Insomnia, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping
- Appetite and/or weight loss or overeating and weight gain
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Suicide attempts
- Restlessness and irritability
- Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to treatment, such as headaches, digestive disorders, and chronic pain

If your family member is depressed, you will need to help them seek medical assistance and make alternate child care arrangements as quickly as possible.

Government Support

There is a range of government services available to help grandparent carers and it might be helpful to look at the resources available and show your family member where to find the information relevant to your circumstances.

Resources include:

Grandparent advisers can help by:

- understanding and supporting your family circumstances and the unique conditions faced by grandparent carers.
- providing information and help to access government payments and services
- arranging appointments for grandparents with specialist staff, such as social workers
- arranging referrals to other federal, State and community service providers who may also be able to help grandparents meet their care commitments.

For more information on grandparent advisers click here.

8 CHILD CARE AND WORK

Payments to help grandparent carers

There are several payments to help non-parent carers, such as grandparents, who provide care to a child. **Family Tax Benefit** is available to help with the costs of raising or caring for children. It is made up of two parts - Family Tax Benefit Part A and Part B.

To help grandparents who are also paying for child care there is also the **Child Care Subsidy** and the **Additional Child Care Subsidy - Grandparents.**

There is a range of government services available to help grandparent carers



WHAT TO DO WHEN YOU CAN'T FIND CHILD CARE?

Finding child care is a tricky business and finding the perfect balance between the type of care, hours, location, quality and cost may seem elusive.

However, even if your initial search for child care didn't provide you with the outcome you were hoping for don't panic!

There is a **wide range of high quality child care options** available to Australians and you can compare the pros and cons **here**. Learning about the different types of care available will help you make an informed decision about the best type of care arrangement for your family.

While a single service provider offering care all day every day may be the easiest solution it may not be the best, and if you can't find a centre offering the hours you require then you'll need to think outside the box.



8 CHILD CARE AND WORK

Many families use a variety of different types of care. Consider the following scenarios:

1. **Scenario 1** – Jane is returning to work full time after spending eight months at home with baby Tina, she and her partner Tom have secured centre based care near Tom's work on Mondays and Tuesdays. The centre has said more days will be available in two months, until then Jane's mother has agreed to mind Tina on Wednesdays and Thursdays and Tom will work from home on Fridays.
2. **Scenario 2** – Donna is returning to work part time (three days per week) after 12 months at home with baby Evan, she and her partner Paul have negotiated a nanny share arrangement with friends from the Mums and Bubs group Donna joined after having Evan.
3. **Scenario 3** – Haylee and her partner David are both returning to work after six months at home with baby James. James will go to a local family day carer from Monday-Thursday and Haylee has negotiated with her employer to work flexible hours and will take Fridays off to mind James.
4. **Scenario 4** – Cathy is returning to work part time after 12 weeks at home with baby Sasha. Until Sasha is one Cathy and her partner Pete have both decided to work part time, Cathy will stay at home Monday-Tuesday, Pete will do Thursday and Friday and they are employing a babysitter to work Wednesdays.
5. **Scenario 5** – Jan is a single mum who runs a business from home. Jan's baby Sam is six months old and she has decided to employ an au pair for six months before starting Sam full time in a child care centre. The au pair can't work unsupervised but because Jan will be in the house the whole time she will be available to help when necessary.
6. **Scenario 6** – Maggie's partner Roy is in the army and is away a lot and they have four month old baby Jade. Maggie is returning to work part time for the rest of Jade's first year and they have decided to employ a nanny to care for Jade at home on the days Maggie is working.



Keep in mind that spaces come up in child care services all the time

Remember your child care requirements may change as your child grows and as your work commitments change. It's also important to keep in mind the fact that spaces come up in child care services all the time, so if full time care in a long day care centre is your ultimate goal work towards it.

If your ideal centre offers you two days, take the days and then weigh up your options, talk to your friends and family about helping, consider using a family day carer, evaluate the cost of a nanny or babysitter or talk to your boss about flexible work options.

Children are fairly flexible. In time most kids will **successfully adjust to a new care arrangement**. Taking a multi-faceted approach to your child care needs may require a little more coordination than using a single child care service but it gives you a great excuse to explore your options fully and use a little imagination in your planning.

Nine

The Cost of Care

HOW MUCH DOES CHILD CARE COST?

The first things most visitors to CareforKids.com.au want to know is where they can find child care and how much it will cost.

The table below provides an approximate guide of current costs for child care and should be used as an ***indication only*** as prices vary significantly.

Type of child care	Price Range
Nanny	Minimum hourly rates are set out in the Miscellaneous Award but on average, $30-$45 per hour for a live-in or high end live-out nanny (+agency fee and super if applicable)
Nanny sharing	$17+ per hour per family (+agency fee)
Au pair	$350-$450 pocket money per week (+agency fee)
Mother's help	$25 -$35 per hour (+agency fee)
Long day care (child care centre)	$70-$188 per day
Pre-school	$45-$80 per day
Family day care	$7.50-$16.80 per hour dependent on location and service
In Home Care	$30-$35 per hour
Babysitter	$25-$35 per hour (+agency fee)
Outside of School Hours Care	$15-$30 per morning session $25-$45 per afternoon session

It's important to remember that child care costs vary from provider to provider, and from state to state, and they are not regulated by the Government. Most providers charge a minimum daily rate or an hourly rate. Some service fees may be inclusive of food and nappies, while others, such as family day care, require parents to provide everything.

Financial support

It's also useful to remember that these are the prices before the Child Care Subsidy has been taken into account. This subsidy, which was introduced in July 2018 to replace the Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate, reduces the cost of care to eligible families.

The CareforKids.com.au **Child Care Subsidy Calculator** can help you determine how much support you can expect to receive, and our article about the **Child Care Subsidy** is also a helpful source of information.

CareforKids.com.au cost widget

Our **unique cost widget** is another way to check prices for centre-based care. Simply type in your postcode, and the cost widget averages out the prices of providers in your area. For the exact costs of care in your area, you will need to contact the providers directly.

How much does child care cost?

While a breakdown of the costs of every type of care in each state and territory is beyond the scope of this guide, we have sourced some information from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) which will hopefully give you a little more information about what prices to expect as you look for care.

Every few years, the ABS conducts a nationwide Child Care Survey which presents information about the use of, and demand for, child care for children aged 0-12 years.

The last survey was completed in 2017 and the findings provide useful information on average child care costs across Australia.

It is worth pointing out that the costs reported here are the net costs to parents after the Child Care Benefit and the Child Care Rebate were taken into account (the Child Care Subsidy had not yet come into effect).

The **ABS survey** showed that in 2017, 49.3 per cent of children aged up to 12 years usually attended some kind of care, whether formal or informal.

As with previous survey years, long day care was the most commonly used type of formal care and this was followed by before and/or after school care programs.



Grandparents were the most popular type of informal care.

For the majority of children who usually attended formal care, the mean cost after subsidies was $110.50 per week and the mean number of hours attended was 16.

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment also produces quarterly reports showing child care use and costs. The Child Care in Australia report, from the March quarter 2020, shows the average hourly child care fee across all service types (except In Home Care) was $10.00, before Australian Government fee assistance.

Fees varied across service types from a low of $7.45 per hour for Outside School Hours Care to a high of $10.55 per hour for family day care.

Preschool may be free or relatively affordable, depending on which state or territory you live in. The **ABS' Preschool Education Survey** showed that 76 per cent of children enrolled in a preschool program in 2020 paid $4 or less per hour after subsidies were deducted.

Which factors increase cost?

The best way to determine the cost of child care in your area is to contact a few services and chat to them directly. Think about whether you would prefer to have everything provided for your child or whether you would prefer to send your child off each day with nappies and food. This decision alone will help you determine the best type of child care for your family and will directly affect the cost.

When comparing costs it is also important to think about peripheral expenses, such as the price of travelling to and from the child care service in terms of petrol, public transport and/or convenience. These factors can have a considerable effect on the total price you end up paying for your child care.

9 THE COST OF CARE

WHAT IS THE CHILD CARE SUBSIDY?

The Child Care Subsidy (CCS) is the main government payment available to support families with the cost of child care.

The CCS replaced the Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate in 2018. In most cases CCS is paid directly to early childhood providers and passed on to families as a reduction in fees.

Typically, families pay their provider the difference between the actual fee charged and the subsidy amount (this is often referred to as the gap).



How much Child Care Subsidy will my family receive?

Under the Child Care Subsidy the amount of financial support a family receives will depend on three factors:

1. Combined family income
2. How much work/activity the parents do
3. The hourly rate cap, based on the type of approved child care being used and child's age



1 COMBINED FAMILY INCOME

As briefly mentioned above the CCS is means tested, which means how much your family earns affects how much subsidy you will receive. The government says the goal is to offer more support to lower income families.

The table below summarises the amount of subsidy available to families at various income levels (**current** as at 1 July 2021).

Combined family income per year	Subsidy per cent (of the actual fee charged or relevant hourly rate cap whichever is lower)
Up to $70,015	85 per cent of fees
More than $70,015 to below $175,015	Between 85 per cent and 50 per cent of fees*
$175,015 to below $254,305	50 per cent of fees
$254,305 to below $344,305	Between 50 per cent and 20 per cent of fees*
$344,305 to below $354,305	20 per cent of fees
$354,305 or more	Zero per cent**

* The subsidy gradually decreases by one per cent for each additional $3,000 of family income.

** You can claim the CCS if your family income estimate is $354,305 or greater, and if you actually earn less than this cut-off figure, the government will pay the CCS you're entitled to, when they balance your payments after the financial year ends.

Enhanced Child Care Subsidy

In late 2021, the government announced two key changes to the CCS, which benefit high income families and those with multiple young children in care:

1 **The annual CCS cap has been removed** – Previously, there was an annual CCS cap of $10,655 per child, per financial year for families earning more than $190,015. However, as of 10 December 2021, the government has removed the annual cap for all families who receive the CCS.

2 **A higher CCS is available to some families** – From 7 March 2022, families with more than one child in care (aged five or under) will get a higher subsidy for their second child and younger children.

Your family may be eligible for this higher subsidy if you earn less than $354,305 and have more than one child aged five or under in child care.

Services Australia will work out which children get the higher subsidy by:

- Assessing all children in your family
- Identifying your 'standard rate' child, and
- Identifying your 'higher rate' child/ren

Your standard rate child is usually your eldest CCS eligible child (aged five or under) and they will attract the standard subsidy. Your higher rate child/ren will get a 30 per cent higher subsidy, up to a maximum of 95 per cent. If your family is already getting the CCS, these changes will be applied automatically, and there's **more detail here**.

2 HOW MUCH WORK/ACTIVITY THE PARENTS DO

The CCS encourages parents to return to work, by reducing the cost of care for people in employment.

This means the more work or other recognised activity a person undertakes. The more subsidised care they are entitled to, up to a maximum of 100 hours per fortnight. This is called an activity test.

In families with two parents, both parents (unless an exemption applies) must meet the activity test and the parent with the lowest hours of work or other recognised activity will determine how much subsidised care the family is entitled to.

Step	Hours of activity per fortnight	Maximum hours of subsidised care per child, per fortnight
1	Less than 8 hours	Zero hours if you earn more than $70,015 24 hours if you earn $70,015 or less
2	More than 8 to 16 hours	36 hours
3	More than 16 to 48 hours	72 hours
4	More than 48 hours	100 hours

9 THE COST OF CARE

Recognised activities

To meet the activity test for the CCS, you can be involved in a wide range of paid and unpaid **recognised activities**, including:

- Paid work, including self-employment
- Paid or unpaid leave, including parental or maternity leave
- Unpaid work for the family business
- Unpaid work experience/internship
- Actively setting up a business
- Doing an approved course of education/study
- Training for the purpose of up-skilling or improving employment prospects
- Active job seeking
- Volunteering
- Other activities 'on a case by case' basis

You can get up to 36 hours of subsidised care per fortnight if your only activity is volunteering or job-seeking, as long as you do this at least eight hours per fortnight.

Multiple activities (e.g. working, studying and volunteering) can be combined to determine the maximum hours of subsidised care you can get, and reasonable travel time between your child care service and recognised activity may also be included.

If you work casual or irregular hours, you need to give Services Australia the highest estimate of your hours.

The hours of subsidised care can be used in **different ways**, depending on how your child care provider charges you – per hour or per day.

Exemption from the activity test

In some instances, people don't have to meet the activity test to get hours of subsidised care.

For instance, you may be exempt from the CCS activity levels and able to access 36 hours of subsidised care per fortnight, if your preschool-aged child goes to an **early education program** in the year before big school.

Low-income families earning **$69,390** or less per year can access 24 hours of subsidised care per child per fortnight without having to meet the activity test.

3 THE HOURLY RATE CAP

The hourly rate cap, based on the type of approved child care your family uses and your child's age, is the third factor which affects the amount of CCS you receive.



Centre based day care attracts the highest subsidy, family day care comes next, and outside school hours care attracts the lowest subsidy.

The maximum hourly subsidies (for the 2021/2022 financial year) are as follows:

Type of child care service	Maximum hourly rate cap
Centre based care (long day care and occasional care)	$12.31 or $10.77 for school aged children
Family day care	$11.40
Outside school hours care (before, after and vacation care)	$10.77 or $12.31 for below school aged children
In Home Care	$33.47 (per family)

It's important to note that child care providers charge their own fees and the rates above reflect the maximum subsidy amount, not the fees that will be charged.

These caps are the maximum provided under the CCS and are used in combination with family income and activity levels to determine exactly how much subsidy a family receives.

Your CCS percentage will be applied to the hourly rate cap or actual hourly fee charged by your service – whichever is lower. This means that:

- If your child care provider charges less than the maximum hourly cap set by the government, you'll receive the subsidy as the applicable percentage of the fee charged, and
- If your service charges more than the hourly rate cap, you'll have to pay the gap between what the subsidy covers and what the provider charges.



9 THE COST OF CARE

We have developed a Child Care Subsidy Calculator, which you can use to estimate the level of subsidy your family may be entitled to receive.

You can access the CareforKids.com.au Child Care Subsidy Calculator here.

To claim the Child Care Subsidy, click here.

Also, keep in mind that the government withholds five per cent of your CCS to reduce the risk of an overpayment (which you'd need to pay back). This percentage can be changed to another withholding amount if you wish.



What is the Child Care Safety Net?

The Child Care Safety Net aims to make it easier for vulnerable or disadvantaged children, or those in regional or remote communities, to access high quality early education and care in the years before school.

It offers additional support to targeted groups and the Child Care Safety Net is comprised of three components:

1. The Additional Child Care Subsidy
2. The Community Child Care Fund
3. The Inclusion Support Program

1 THE ADDITIONAL CHILD CARE SUBSIDY

The ACCS is a payment on top of the CCS to help some families pay for child care. To be eligible for it, you must be eligible for the CCS, and there are different types of ACCS people may get, depending on their circumstances:

- The **Temporary Financial Hardship** subsidy assists those who are experiencing challenges such as a job loss, the death of a partner/child or a major disaster event
- The **Grandparent subsidy** is for grandparent carers who get income support payments
- The **Child Wellbeing subsidy** helps people who are caring for a child who's vulnerable or at risk of harm, abuse or neglect. If you think you might be eligible for this subsidy, ask your service about it, because they need to apply on your behalf, and
- The **Transition to Work subsidy** assists people who are moving from welfare to work.

Those eligible for the first three types of ACCS subsidy can access 100 hours of subsidised care per child, per fortnight (for set periods of time) and the government will pay the lower of these:

- 100 per cent of the fee charged where it's equal to or less than the hourly rate cap, or
- Up to 120 per cent of the hourly rate cap if the actual fee is higher than the cap

For the Transition to Work subsidy, the government pays 95 per cent of the fee charged or up to 95 per cent of the hourly rate cap, and the number of subsidised hours is worked out with an activity test.

2 THE COMMUNITY CHILD CARE FUND

While this fund is not payable to families it aims to benefit families by improving access to high quality early childhood education and care services, particularly in disadvantaged, regional and remote communities, and Indigenous communities.

Under the fund, eligible child care services can apply for additional funding to reduce the barriers to accessing care, increase the number of child care places in areas where vacancies are scarce, and help them stay open when facing viability issues.

3 THE INCLUSION SUPPORT PROGRAM

This initiative offers funding to child care providers to make it easier for them to include children with additional needs within a mainstream program.

Inclusion Agencies work with services to look for and remedy any barriers to inclusion.

The program supports providers by improving their capability and capacity to offer education and care for children with additional needs and offers these children an opportunity to play and learn alongside peers developing along the usual trajectory.



Ten

Government Policy and Quality Standards

WHAT IS ACECQA?

Most parents considering an early childhood education and care provider focus on finding a service which provides the best possible care. There are a number of informal ways to judge whether a service is providing quality care, you can:

- visit and check for yourself
- talk to other parents
- and you can question the director and the staff of the services you are considering.

Background research like this should help you narrow down your options.

On a national level, the Federal Government via the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) is responsible for working to ensure young children receive high quality care, including positive learning experiences, varied and interesting programs, a safe and secure environment and the benefit of good relationships between children, their families and their carers.

ACECQA works with State and Territory governments and the early childhood sector to help realise the benefits of the **National Quality Framework**, the guidelines which describe how early childhood education and care services should be provided in Australia.

In conjunction with State and Territory governments and jurisdictions ACECQA works to:

- implement changes that benefit children birth to 13 years of age and their families
- monitor and promote the consistent application of the **Education and Care Services National Law** across all States and Territories
- support the children's education and care sector to improve quality outcomes for children.

For more information visit ACECQA.



10 GOVERNMENT POLICY AND QUALITY STANDARDS

WHAT THE NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARDS MEAN FOR FAMILIES

How Services are rated under the National Quality Framework

In January 2012 the National Quality Framework (NQF) came into effect across Australia.

The purpose of the NQF is to improve and standardise the quality of child care through a range of measures including better staff to child ratios, higher staff qualifications and an assessment and rating system designed to promote continuous improvement.

Under the NQF child care services are assessed and rated against the National Quality Standards (NQS).

What the National Quality Standard Ratings Mean for Families

The NQS measures the quality of early childhood education and care in Australia. It will cover most long day care, family day care, preschool/kindergarten and outside school hours care services.

Under these standards child care services will be assessed and rated against the seven quality areas, 18 standards and 58 elements that make up the NQS. **Click here** to see a summary table of the NQS quality areas, standards and elements.



ACECQA is responsible for working to ensure young children receive high quality care

10 GOVERNMENT POLICY AND QUALITY STANDARDS

Once your child's service is assessed against these standards it will receive one of the following ratings.

Rating	Definition
Excellent	The Excellent rating is the highest possible rating and can only be awarded by ACECQA (effective from May 2013). Providers with a service rated Exceeding National Quality Standard can choose to apply.
Exceeding National Quality Standard	A service that receives an overall rating of Exceeding will have exceeded the NQS in at least four or more of the seven quality areas, including two of the 'key' areas.
Meeting National Quality Standard	An overall rating of Meeting means that your service has met all of the elements in the NQS and may have exceeded the standards in some quality areas.
Working Towards National Quality Standard	If your service receives an overall rating of Working Towards it means the service has not met at least one of the 58 elements in the NQS. It may have a mix of higher and lower ratings across the seven quality areas. It may take time for some services to meet each element in these standards, which is why the Working Towards rating is important. Working Towards does not mean that the service has failed to meet any of the requirements that pose a risk to the safety, health or wellbeing of children.
Significant Improvement Required	This rating is given when a service fails to meet requirements in a way that poses an unacceptable risk to the health, wellbeing or safety of children. Services which receive this rating must work with a Regulator to immediately improve their quality otherwise they will have their operating licence withdrawn.
Provisional	A service that is yet to be assessed against the National Quality Standard.

10 GOVERNMENT POLICY AND QUALITY STANDARDS

How are services assessed?

Each State and Territory has a **Regulatory Authority** responsible for assessing the quality of your child's service and for investigating complaints. Officers from these Authorities have been trained to observe and make consistent judgements about the quality of care available in the service being assessed.

Child care services have been assessed against the NQS since January 2012 and services which have already been assessed are required to display their ratings on premises. The government hopes the ratings system will make it easier for parents to choose child care by ensuring they have the information necessary to make an informed decision.

CareforKids.com.au child care ratings and reviews also offer parents a valuable and reliable source of information about the experiences other families have had with their child care service.

Click here to read the latest parent ratings and reviews or share your experiences with other parents by searching for your service and posting a rating.

A NOTE ON SERVICES NOT COVERED BY THE NATIONAL QUALITY FRAMEWORK

Under current legislation not all early childhood education and care providers are covered by the National Quality Framework. These 'Out of Scope' services include some occasional care providers, care offered in holiday resorts, mobile services and many others.

Many of these 'Out of Scope' services are covered by State regulations but some are not, and if you have any questions about this then you should check with the provider or with your relevant State or Territory authority. It's important to note that some of these providers may be covered by the NQF in the future.

WHAT QUALIFICATIONS DO EDUCATORS NEED TO WORK IN THE EARLY EDUCATION AND CARE SECTOR?

Early childhood educators play an important role in society. They lay the foundations for life-long learning among children and keep our little people safe, happy and entertained. It's important that every educator possess the skills and training required to nurture and develop young children to their full potential.

Here we look at the different qualifications educators need and what parents can do if they suspect there's something amiss with an educator's credentials.

What types of early childhood education and care qualifications are there?

The National Quality Framework (NQF) sets out the minimum qualifications that various educators must possess to work in the early childhood sector. There are three types of early childhood qualifications:

1. Teacher level – a bachelor's degree or above
2. Diploma level
3. Certificate level

What qualifications are needed to work in centre-based services?

In centre-based services with preschool age children and younger, at least 50 per cent of the educators must hold, or be actively working towards, an approved diploma level education and care qualification (or higher), or its equivalent.

All other educators must have, or be in the process of getting, at least an approved Certificate III level education and care qualification.



10 GOVERNMENT POLICY AND QUALITY STANDARDS

Services must also 'engage or have access to' an Early Childhood Teacher (ECT) for a proportion of time, and the ECT must hold an approved early childhood teaching qualification, or equivalent early childhood teacher qualification.

The ECT may need to be **registered or accredited**, depending on which state and territory they work in.

As of 1 January 2020, approved providers of long day care services, preschools and kindergartens with 60 or more children being looked after, must have a second ECT or a 'suitably qualified person' available some of the time. This person can:

- Be actively working towards an approved early childhood teaching qualification and have completed at least 50 per cent of the qualification, or hold an approved diploma level qualification, or
- Be registered/accredited as a primary or secondary school teacher in Australia and have at least an ACECQA-approved diploma level qualification.

Once children move beyond early learning, there are no national qualification requirements for educators providing before and after school care and vacation care at centre-based services.

To learn about state and territory qualification requirements for Outside School Hours Care services, click here.

What qualifications are required for family day care?

In South Australia, family day care educators must hold at least an approved Certificate III level education and care qualification.

However, in the rest of Australia, it's sufficient for a family day care educator to be enrolled in the course and be making good progress towards completing it. Alternatively, they can hold an approved Certificate III qualification, or a qualification that ACECQA says is equivalent to it, or one that was approved and completed before 1 January 2012.

Family day care coordinators must meet a higher standard and hold an approved diploma level education and care qualification.

And all in all, the **government** says, *'Proper training helps to provide better outcomes for your child's learning and development.'*

All early childhood teachers need an approved early childhood teaching qualification

What first aid qualifications must educators hold?

Part of an educator's job is keeping children healthy and safe, so the **Education and Care Services National Regulations** outline what qualifications educators need to deal with medical emergencies.

At all times, a centre-based service must have at least one staff member (or supervisor) on duty with these current and approved qualifications:

- First aid qualifications
- Anaphylaxis management training
- Emergency asthma management training

One person may hold all three qualifications, or the expertise may be split between staff members. They must be immediately available in an emergency.

Meanwhile in family day care services, each educator and educator assistant must hold all three qualifications.

In terms of currency, first aid qualifications need to be renewed every three years and refresher training in CPR is required annually.

What sort of concerns might parents have about an educator's qualifications?

Most educators are professional, knowledgeable and fully trained to look after your child's care and learning. However, if something seems amiss, it's definitely worth investigating.

For instance, you may suspect that an educator's qualifications are:

1. Fraudulent, i.e. a fake document
2. Improperly awarded, i.e. the educator doesn't have the skills and knowledge required
3. Cancelled

How can you check an educator's qualifications?

If your educator's skills and training are raising alarm bells, then it's a good idea to outline your concerns with the centre director or family day care coordinator.

In the case of possibly fraudulent qualifications, you can also contact the educational institution that supposedly issued the qualification. They will be able to tell if the document lacks legitimacy.

10 GOVERNMENT POLICY AND QUALITY STANDARDS

When it comes to improperly awarded or cancelled qualifications, there is the option of making a complaint to the **Australian Skills Quality Authority**. And, depending on where you're based, you can also get in touch with the **Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority** or the **Western Australian Training Accreditation Council** to report a suspicious qualification.

Saying that, the majority of educators do a fantastic job with our babies, toddlers and preschoolers, bringing hands-on experience and the required tertiary qualifications to play rooms.

For more information visit ACECQA.

If something seems amiss, it's definitely worth investigating



CHILD CARE RATIOS

You want to know that your child is receiving the best possible care and attention while at their child care service, and in support of this, educator to child ratios are in place to ensure that there are enough educators working with children at each service.

Under The National Quality Framework, there are ratio requirements for specific service types and age brackets, and the **government** explains that these, 'Set ratios are based on evidence about how quality education and care benefits children.'

Educators have to be working directly with children to be counted in the educator to child ratio (not sitting around the corner eating lunch), and children must be adequately supervised at all times.

In centre-based services, like long day care, ratios are calculated across the whole service (not room by room), and ACECQA explains that, 'An educator who is caring for one age range of children can also be counted against another age range of children, as long as the ratio for each age range is maintained and adequate supervision is maintained at all times.'

ACECQA's **Educator to Child Ratio Calculator** helps centre-based services work out the minimum number of educators they need for the children they're looking after.

Educator to child ratios around Australia

Each state and territory has its own ratio requirements, and child care ratios around the nation are detailed in the following table:



10 GOVERNMENT POLICY AND QUALITY STANDARDS

States/Territories	Service Type	Educator to Child Ratios
Children from birth to 24 months		
All States and Territories	Child care centre	1 educator to 4 children
Children aged over 24 months and less than 36 months		
ACT	Child care centre	1 educator to 5 children
NSW	Child care centre	1 educator to 5 children
NT	Child care centre	1 educator to 5 children
SA	Child care centre	1 educator to 5 children
QLD	Child care centre	1 educator to 5 children
TAS	Child care centre	1 educator to 5 children
VIC	Child care centre	1 educator to 4 children
WA	Child care centre	1 educator to 5 children
Children aged 36 months up to and including preschool age		
NSW	Child care centre/preschool	1 educator to 10 children
NT	Child care centre/preschool	1 educator to 11 children
QLD	Child care centre/preschool	1 educator to 11 children
SA	Child care centre/preschool	1 educator to 11 children
TAS	Child care centre Preschool program	1 educator to 10 children 2 educators to 25 children
VIC	Child care centre/preschool	1 educator to 11 children
WA	Child care centre/preschool	1 educator to 10 children

10 GOVERNMENT POLICY AND QUALITY STANDARDS

States/Territories	Service Type	Educator to Child Ratios
Children over preschool age		
NSW	Centre-based care	1 educator to 15 children
NT	Centre-based care	1 educator to 15 children
QLD	Centre-based care	1 educator to 15 children
SA	Centre-based care	1 educator to 15 children
TAS	Centre-based care	1 educator to 15 children
VIC	Centre-based care	1 educator to 15 children
WA	Centre-based care	1 educator to 13 children or 1 educator to 10 children if kindergarten children in attendance
ACT	Centre-based care	1 educator to 11 children
Children aged birth to 13 years		
All States and Territories	Family day care	1 educator to 7 children with no more than 4 children pre school age or younger including educator's own children younger than 13 years of age at home with no other adult to look after them

Further information about the educator to child ratios or qualification requirements can be found on the ACECQA website.

10 GOVERNMENT POLICY AND QUALITY STANDARDS

EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHER (ECT) REQUIREMENTS

The number of children attending a centre-based service at any one time determines how much time an ECT (or two) needs to be available:

If there are less than 25 children: The service must have access to an ECT for at least 20 per cent of the time the service is operating. The ECT can do this by using 'information communication technology.'

If there are 25 to 59 children: A full-time or full-time equivalent ECT must be employed/engaged by the service, or an ECT must attend the service for:

- Six hours a day (when the service operates for 50+ hours per week), or
- Sixty per cent of the time (when the service operates for less than 50 hours a week).

If there are 60 to 80 children: The same requirements as for 25 to 59 children apply. Plus, as of 1 January 2020, the service must employ a second ECT or 'suitably qualified person' to attend for:

- Three hours a day (when the service operates for 50+ hours per week), or
- Thirty per cent of the time (when the service operates for less than 50 hours a week).

These requirements don't apply if the service has 60 to 80 approved places and it employs/engages a full-time or full-time equivalent ECT, plus a second ECT or suitably qualified person for half of the full-time or full-time equivalent hours at the service.

If there are more than 80 children: The same requirements as for 25 to 59 children apply. Plus, a second employed ECT or suitably qualified person has to be in attendance for:

- Six hours a day (when the service operates for 50+ hours per week), or
- Sixty per cent of the time (when the service operates for less than 50 hours a week).

These requirements don't apply if the service has over 80 approved places and it employs/engages a full-time or full-time equivalent ECT, plus a second full-time or full-time equivalent ECT or suitably qualified person.

Things are different in NSW, because of reg 272 of the National Regulations. Click here for the detail.

THE NATIONAL DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

The **National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)** is a federal scheme which provides support for people with a permanent and significant disability, as well as their family and carers.

When fully implemented the NDIS will support around 500,000 Australians under the age of 65 through a variety of supports and services, such as assistance with personal care, access to the community, therapy services and essential equipment, as well as information and referrals to existing services.

For the families of children with disability or developmental delay, the NDIS makes it easier to access early support for their current and long-term benefit, and it facilitates more opportunities for families to exercise choice and control in the decisions surrounding their child's wellbeing.

Eligibility

For people who meet the **access requirements**, the NDIS offers a range of supports and services.

A person may be eligible if they:

- Usually need support from a person because of a permanent and significant disability
- Use special equipment because of a permanent and significant disability
- Need some supports now to reduce their future needs

People have to be under the age of 65 to access the NDIS, and it's only available to those who live in Australia and are Australian citizens or have a Permanent or Special Category Visa.

There's an **application process** to access the NDIS, and specific help available for children under the age of seven with disability or developmental delay.



10 GOVERNMENT POLICY AND QUALITY STANDARDS

The National Disability Insurance Agency

It's the job of the National Disability Insurance Agency (NDIA) to implement the NDIS, and the NDIA administers its general supports through the **Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) program**.

Via this program, the NDIA:

- Provides information, linkages and referrals to connect people with disability, and their families and carers, with appropriate disability, community and mainstream supports
- Ensures people with disability can access mainstream supports
- Builds community awareness, so people with disability are better supported and included
- Builds individual capacity to improve outcomes for people with disability, families and carers, and
- Coordinates with the local area to help people plan and access community services, supports and activities

Local Area Coordinators (LACs) are involved with all of the above, and they help to streamline a person's NDIS experience and promote community inclusion.

The early childhood approach

The NDIA has also developed a national, best practice approach to help children aged zero to six with disability or developmental delay.

It's called the **Early Childhood approach**, and the NDIS funds local organisations (known as 'Early Childhood Partners) to deliver this family-focused, early intervention approach and ensure children receive the supports and services they need to build skills and get the best possible start in life.

Early Childhood Partners can help families and carers by providing information, working out each child's support needs, referring them to appropriate services and supports, and monitoring their progress.

For people who meet the access requirements, the NDIS offers a range of supports and services

10 GOVERNMENT POLICY AND QUALITY STANDARDS

NDIS plan

Every **NDIS participant** has an individual plan that details their goals and funding.

Participants have a planning meeting with their Local Area Coordinator, Early Childhood Partner or NDIA planner, and their NDIS plan is based on these discussions. It contains:

- Information about the person, e.g. their disability, day-to-day activities, aids and equipment used etc
- Non-funded support given by family and friends
- Community/government-funded services and supports the person uses, e.g. health centres and support groups
- The person's current and long-term goals
- Funded supports they've been allocated, directly related to their disability

The person uses their funding to purchase services and supports to achieve their goals. They can manage the NDIS plan themselves, get assistance from a Plan Manager or have the NDIA manage their plan.

Funded supports

NDIS funding gets allocated across three support budgets – Core Supports, Capacity Building Supports and Capital Supports – and each of these budgets have various support categories.

For example, the Core Supports budget includes funding for:

- Assistance with daily life, e.g. help with showering and dressing
- Consumables, e.g. hand rails
- Assistance with social and community, e.g. a support worker to help the person take part in social/community activities
- Transport

The funding is allocated according to the individual needs of the person, in the areas relevant to them. Funded supports may change from plan to plan as needs change.

For more information about supports funded by the NDIS, click here.

Carers

The NDIS recognises the important role unpaid carers have in the lives of people with a disability and aims to better support them.

10 GOVERNMENT POLICY AND QUALITY STANDARDS

As such, parents/carers of children with a disability entering NDIS have an important role in decision-making about ongoing support needs, goal-setting, assessment and planning for the future.

Funded supports may be of direct and indirect support to carers, as well as the child being cared for.

For more information about the role of carers under NDIS and how to access services and support visit the **NDIS Family and Carers page**.

Funding is allocated to the individual needs of the person, in the areas relevant to them





Eleven

Keeping your child healthy in child care

NO JAB NO PLAY – CHILD CARE AND VACCINATION

A lot of things changed when the single Child Care Subsidy replaced the Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate back in 2018, but something that remained the same, was the government's 'no jab, no pay' policy.

To be eligible for the Child Care Subsidy and Additional Child Care Subsidy, your youngster must meet the Government's immunisation requirements.

Here we look at what this means in practice and outline recent changes to the National Immunisation Program.

What are the immunisation requirements for the Child Care Subsidy?

To meet the government's requirements and be eligible for child care assistance, all of your children aged under 20 must:

- Be up-to-date with the immunisations listed in the Child programs table in the National Immunisation Program, or
- Be on a 'suitable catch-up schedule' under the Australian Immunisation Handbook, or
- Have an approved medical exemption, such as a natural immunity or a history of anaphylaxis after a previous vaccine, which is recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR)

Broadly speaking, your child needs to be vaccinated to receive the subsidy, however, there is no need to tell the government when they're vaccinated. The government checks the AIR using your child's Medicare details, and if your youngster was vaccinated overseas, simply provide the evidence of this to your Australian medical practitioner and they'll update the AIR for you.

In terms of timing, if your child stops meeting the immunisation requirements for some reason, then you have 63 days to start meeting them again before your subsidy stops.

There are also repercussions when it comes to the Family Tax Benefit Part A, and the government may reduce these payments by up to $29.68 per child, per fortnight if your child doesn't meet the immunisation requirements.

11 KEEPING YOUR CHILDREN HEALTHY IN CARE

What immunisations do young children need, and when?



Under the National Immunisation Program schedule, here are the vaccines applicable for infants and preschoolers:

Age	Vaccines & Diseases Covered
Birth	An injection for hepatitis B. Usually offered in hospital, this vaccine must be given within 7 days and is of greatest benefit if given in their first 24 hours.
2 months (vaccines can be given from 6-weeks-old)	A combined injection for diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), hepatitis B, polio and Hib (haemophilus influenzae type b) An injection for pneumococcal Vaccine for rotavirus
4 months	A combined injection for diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), hepatitis B, polio and Hib (haemophilus influenzae type b) An injection for pneumococcal Vaccine for rotavirus
6 months	A combined injection for diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough), hepatitis B, polio and Hib (haemophilus influenzae type b)
12 months	An injection for meningococcal ACWY A combined injection for measles, mumps and rubella An injection for pneumococcal
18 months	An injection for Hib (haemophilus influenzae type b) A combined injection for measles, mumps, rubella and varicella (chickenpox) A combined injection for diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough)
4 years	A combined injection for diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough) and polio



State and territory immunisation programs

The National Immunisation Schedule covers specific vaccine brands, and there are additional immunisations (including flu vaccines) for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and 'medically at-risk children'.

Click here for that information, and also keep in mind that there are immunisation schedules for each State and Territory, meaning that additional government-funded vaccines may be applicable in your area.

11 KEEPING YOUR CHILDREN HEALTHY IN CARE

Exclusion policies

As mentioned above, when a vaccine preventable disease breaks out children who are not vaccinated due to medical reasons, may be asked to stay at home for their own protection and also to avoid the possibility of them infecting other children.

To ensure exclusion policies are adhered to, child care centres ask all parents to provide a copy of their child's vaccination history on enrolment. The exclusion rule also applies to child care centre staff who haven't been vaccinated.

Exclusion policies can be frustrating for working parents who rely on child care. Read our article on **Sick Days and Emergency Care** for some ideas on how to find child care if your little one is excluded from their child care centre.

Most child cares have exclusion policies for illnesses which can't be vaccinated against as well.

Most child care centres have exclusion policies for illnesses which can't be vaccinated against as well. Remember that the policies are in place to protect your child and the rest of your family and you should make every effort to stick to the rules.

In summary, it pays to have your child immunised – both in terms of their health and your family's eligibility for child care assistance.



STRATEGIES FOR KEEPING YOUR CHILD HEALTHY IN CHILD CARE

It is a fact of life that children in group care get sick. They have increased exposure to other children, and play closely with shared toys, in addition, children have lower resistance to germs than adults.

Unless you are willing to hire a nanny or stay at home yourself you can't avoid illness entirely, however, there are some simple measures you can take to prevent your child from becoming sick and reduce the impact of the illness once it strikes.

How Sick is Too Sick?

The first decision you need to make when your child is ill is whether they are too sick to send to child care. Many children with a mild illness, such as a cold, can attend child care without causing harm to themselves or the other children.

However, you should always check your child care provider's policy on illness before you send your child off to child care for the day. Many providers have clear policies on sick children which should be adhered to. A common example of this is:

'If your child's nose is running with green or yellow mucous they should be kept home'.



11 KEEPING YOUR CHILDREN HEALTHY IN CARE

Nothing is more likely to cause friction between care providers and parents than when sick children are sent to care when they should be kept at home so make sure you are very familiar with the policy and stick to it!

It is sensible to have a sick day contingency plan ready for the day your child is too sick to send to child care. Read our article on **Emergency Child Care** for tips on how to manage this situation when it happens.

Make sure you are familiar with your child care provider's policy on sick children and never pressure your provider to accept your child if they are ill. Remember, that it is the responsibility of the child care providers to maintain a healthy environment for all the other children, staff and families associated with the child care service and they can't make exceptions.

Another good habit to get in to is to notify your child care provider about any illness that occurred the night before. Many children go to bed with mild symptoms and wake up perfectly healthy after a good night's sleep. However, advising your service of any upsets the night before may make them more alert to any additional signs of sickness your child displays during the day.

While it is sometimes okay to send your child off to care with a cold there are many occasions when you should keep your little one at home.

Many providers have clear policies on sick children which should be adhered to



When making your decision at the beginning of the day ask yourself these three questions:

1. Will my child be well enough to comfortably and happily participate in the activities of the day?
2. Will my child's care provider be able to care for my child without it affecting their ability to look after the other children?
3. Will my child pass the illness on to their playmates if I send them in today?

Preventing the spread of germs is a key part in avoiding the spread of illness

In addition, if your child displays any of the following symptoms you should always keep them at home until you have the all clear from the doctor or until the symptoms lessen and the child seems well enough to return to care:

- A temperature and/or fever accompanied by a behaviour change and other signs of illness such as lethargy, persistent crying or breathing difficulties.
- Signs of severe illness such as uncontrolled coughing, breathing difficulties, wheezing, persistent crying and/or lethargy.
- A respiratory illness such as bronchitis or influenza.
- Uncontrolled diarrhoea.
- Vomiting, once a child has vomited, most doctors recommend that they should not return to child care for a minimum of 24 hours.
- Any sort of rash, especially when accompanied by a fever or behaviour change. Children with chicken pox can return to child care on the sixth day after their rash appears. Children with impetigo can return to care 24 hours after starting a course of antibiotics and children with scabies can return to care after they've been treated.
- Mouth sores that cause drooling.

11 KEEPING YOUR CHILDREN HEALTHY IN CARE



- Bacterial conjunctivitis and yellow discharge from the eye. Your child can return to child care 24 hours after starting a course of antibiotics.

Prevention is Better than Cure

Preventing the spread of germs is a key part in avoiding the spread of illness. Your child care provider should have clear policies outlining the steps it takes to encourage good hygiene among the children. However, good hygiene starts in the home and it is worth teaching your child good habits from as early as possible.

Encouraging your child to adopt the good habits listed below will definitely slow the spread of germs and will hopefully reduce the likelihood of illness.

- Wash your hands regularly: while most children are taught to wash their hands after going to the toilet, children should also be encouraged to wash their hands when they are dirty, before and after eating, after messy activities and when they do anything which puts them in contact with potentially germy objects such as animals.
- Cover your mouth when coughing: uncontrolled coughing and sneezing quickly spread germs around an area. Children should be taught to cover their coughs with whatever they can, while a tissue might not be handy when the urge to cough comes on, children can cough in to their hands and wash them or in to the crook of their arm or sleeve.
- Avoid close contact with sick people: when someone in the family is sick make sure the above two rules are strictly applied so as to avoid the spread of germs within the family.

A NOTE ABOUT COLDS AND 'FLU

Children in child care are more susceptible to winter colds and 'flu because they are in close contact with other children on a regular basis. While it might be tempting to dose your little one up with the latest potion available at the pharmacy, it might be more effective to try cuddles, liquids and plenty of bed rest. Research conducted by American think-tank, the Cochrane Library, has recently shown that many of the cold and flu remedies promoted as beneficial for children actually have little or no effect.

The research included a review of devices which change the air in your child's room such as dehumidifiers and vaporisers and found there was no evidence to prove they work.

The researchers also looked at cough medicines containing antihistamines and found that there was no difference in the recovery rate of children treated with the medicine and those that weren't.

The research concludes that winter colds and 'flu simply have to be put up with and that children who are generally healthy will recover of their own accord in a few days.



In conclusion, the researchers recommend:

- Keeping your child at home to prevent the spread of germs
- Offering plenty of fluids
- Giving your child a paracetamol such as Panadol if there are aches or pains

11 KEEPING YOUR CHILDREN HEALTHY IN CARE

PROTECTING YOUR CHILD'S SKIN WHILE THEY ARE IN CARE

Australia has the highest incidence of skin cancer in the world and overexposure to the sun in childhood is known to be a major cause of skin cancer in later life.

Young people are particularly susceptible to sun damage as they have very little of the pigment, melanin, in their skin to protect them from sunburn.

We can work to reduce the risk of children developing skin cancer in later life by adopting some simple, sensible sun protection measures in early childhood. These measures will hopefully teach children good sun habits for life and will help keep them safe in the powerful Australian sun.



What your child care provider will do to protect your child from the sun

In order to meet the licensing and accreditation standards set by ACECQA, childcare providers are required to have a sun protection policy. This policy will probably be based on information from a local State or Territory such as the Cancer Council.

According to the Cancer Council a sun protection policy should clearly outline a child care service's policies and procedures with regard to protecting children at the centre from UV radiation including:

- Minimising outdoor play during peak UV periods
- Using shade for outdoor play
- Use of sun safe hats and protective clothing
- Use of sun screen
- Education about sun protection
- Role modelling so staff are a positive influence on children

As with all policy and procedure documents your child care provider's sun protection policy should be available for you to review at any time.

11 KEEPING YOUR CHILDREN HEALTHY IN CARE



The Cancer Council identifies the five main ways child care providers should work to protect children from the effects of the sun as follows:

1 Minimise the time spent outdoors during peak UV periods

From October to March, outdoor activity should be minimised between 11am and 3pm and protective clothing, hats and sunscreen should be used at all times when children are outside.

From April to September, outdoor activity can take place at any time during the day and protective clothing, hats and sunscreen are required between 10am and 2pm except in June and July when UV radiation tends to be lower. Please note there are some exceptions to this rule depending on which part of the country your service is located.

2 Use shade for outdoor play

Staying in the shade is one of the most effective ways to reduce sun exposure because it blocks or filters UV rays. However, shade doesn't guarantee total protection, so providers should still encourage children to wear hats, protective clothing and sunscreen.

11 KEEPING YOUR CHILDREN HEALTHY IN CARE

3 Use the right hat

Well designed hats with broad brims which extend right the way around can significantly reduce UV exposure to the face, neck, ears and head. Hats recommended by SunSmart include:

- Broad-brimmed hats with a brim size of at least 6cm
- Bucket style hats with a brim size of at least 5cm and a deep crown
- Legionnaire hats

Recommended hats for adults are:

- Broad-brimmed hats with a brim size of at least 7.5cm
- Bucket style hats with a brim size of at least 6cm and a deep crown
- Legionnaire hats

Baseball caps and sun visors are not recommended as they don't protect the neck, ears and cheeks.

Many child care providers supply hats but if yours doesn't, make sure you select one from the list of recommendations above.

4 Wear protective clothing

Clothing reduces the skin's exposure to UV radiation by creating a barrier to the skin. For the best UV protection children in care should cover as much skin as possible, especially the shoulders and back.

Recommended clothes include: loose fitting shirts or dresses with collars and sleeves, trousers, long skirts and shorts.

5 Apply SPF50+ broad spectrum sun screen before going outside

Sun screen protects exposed skin and should be applied 20 minutes before children go outside and every two hours after the first application. Make sure you apply sunscreen before you send your child off to care at the start of the day, if age appropriate, teach your child to reapply sun screen during the day and check with your provider to make sure they are reapplying sun screen.

Child care providers should use a sunscreen that:

- Has a sun protection factor of 50+, this is the highest available in Australia.
- Is water resistant and broad spectrum. Broad spectrum sun screens block out both UVA and UVB rays both of which contribute to sunburn, premature skin ageing and cancer.

Sunscreens do not block 100 percent of UV rays and should be used in conjunction with clothing, hats, sunglasses and shade.

In addition to these well known measures the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists recently called for a change to the 'No Hat, No Play' rule for children in primary schools to now include sunglasses.

This suggestion is supported by the **Cancer Council** which says that UV radiation to the eyes is not only a concern for hot summer days:

"The level of UV exposure to the eyes is highly dependent on the angle of sunlight reaching the eyes, which is influenced by time of day and time of year. The eye receives direct UV radiation when facing the sun with the sun low in the sky, however reflected and scattered light also have a strong impact in contributing to the total UV exposure to the eyes. Exposure also depends on facial geometry, with the brows and nose blocking some UV radiation at certain times of day."



What your service may ask you to do to protect your child from the sun

Your service may ask you to help protect your child from the effects of the sun by:

- Dressing your child in clothes that offer good sun protection, such as long sleeved, collared shirts and long shorts, skirts and dresses
- Provide a hat for your child in accordance with the list above
- Apply sun screen to your child in the morning before they arrive in care
- Provide sun glasses to older children

References

Factsheets for Families: Sun safety in child care

SunSmart ACT

SunSmart NSW

SunSmart NT

SunSmart QLD

SunSmart SA

SunSmart TAS

SunSmart VIC

SunSmart WA

Skin Cancer and Melanoma by Health Direct

11 KEEPING YOUR CHILDREN HEALTHY IN CARE

CHILD CARE AND HEAD LICE

Head lice - A fact of life!

For most parents there is something inherently icky about the thought of head lice. However, it is worth remembering that head lice have been around for almost as long as humans and they are a natural, if somewhat disgusting, fact of the world we live in!

Kids in child care are very susceptible to head lice because they are physically close to each other for almost all the activities they participate in. Head lice are not fussy and are equally happy in clean or dirty hair; you can catch head lice no matter what your age, ethnicity, hair colour or hair type. This means that all kids in child care are at risk when there is an outbreak in a centre.

There are a few popular myths about head lice, including the idea that you should sterilize and bag up all your linen and soft toys after an outbreak and you can catch lice from sharing hats and headrests.

However, according to the Government's National Health and Medical Research Council, head lice die from dehydration within 6-24 hours of being removed from a human head and research has shown that sharing a hat with someone who has head lice does not increase your chances of getting lice. In addition, head lice cannot jump from one person to the head of another. They are spread only through direct head-to-head contact.

Head lice and child care

Most child care centres have policies on head lice. A typical policy will outline the roles, responsibilities and expectations that child care providers and parents have in the treatment and prevention of head lice. Ask to see your centre's policy so that you are familiar with the process if your child ever does come home with the dreaded critters.

If you detect lice in your child's hair and were not advised about a breakout in their child care centre, it is worth telling the centre as soon as possible as head lice rarely occur on an isolated basis. Most centres have a policy of not identifying children who have lice in a centre, so you shouldn't worry about your child being embarrassed.

The good news for parents is that kids with head lice do not need to be sent home immediately on detection of the lice, and do not have to stay home from their child care centre, as long as they are effectively treated before their next day in care.

11 KEEPING YOUR CHILDREN HEALTHY IN CARE

Effective treatment means that all the lice are dead and this can be achieved by the conditioner and comb technique or through using a chemical treatment.

Conditioner and comb technique

The conditioner and comb technique is a very effective way of detecting and treating head lice however you will need to continue treatment every day for about ten days to ensure you remove all the lice from your child's hair. The conditioner works by stunning the lice for a few minutes so they still enough to be combed out. If you want to give this technique a go, follow the steps outlined below:

1. Untangle your child's hair with an ordinary comb.
2. Apply a generous amount of conditioner to your child's hair covering the entire scalp from roots to tips. You can use any conditioner, however, a white product will make it easier to see the nits.
3. Use your ordinary comb to distribute the conditioner evenly through your child's hair and divide the hair in to four or more sections using hair ties.
4. Change to a head lice comb.
5. Pick up a section of hair near the back of your child's head. Place the teeth of the comb against your child's scalp and comb the hair from the roots through to the tips.
6. Use a tissue to wipe the teeth of the comb clean after each brush stroke and check for head lice and eggs.
7. Comb each section of your child's hair at least twice until you have done the whole head. If your comb becomes clogged up use an old toothbrush to clear the teeth.
8. Keep combing until all the conditioner has gone.
9. Repeat the conditioning and combing daily until you find no head lice for ten consecutive days. It is important to continue for ten days to make sure you remove all the adult lice as well as any lice that hatch, before they get a chance to reproduce.



11 KEEPING YOUR CHILDREN HEALTHY IN CARE



Chemical treatments

If you decide to opt for a chemical treatment make sure you choose one that is specifically for head lice. It would probably be worth a trip to the pharmacy to ensure you use something that meets all Australian safety standards. Remember, that you are using what effectively amounts to a pesticide on your child's head, so it is important to find the right product and to closely follow the usage directions.

None of the chemical treatments available on the market will kill the eggs so it is essential to reapply the treatment one week later to make sure you kill any young lice that hatch after the first treatment.

You could use the conditioner and combing technique between treatments to help remove the lice.

It is important to check the effectiveness of the product you use after the first treatment as some lice are resistant to some chemical treatments. To check whether a product has been successful use a head lice comb to comb your child's hair from roots to tips. Repeat until all the hair has been combed through at least twice. Wipe the comb on a tissue after each stroke and check the lice for movement, if all the lice are dead then the treatment has been successful, however if you see movement the treatment hasn't been effective and you will have to try a product with a different active ingredient.

Preventing head lice

It's important to remember that head lice are irritating but ultimately harmless. By encouraging your child to follow some of the ideas listed below you may reduce the likelihood of your little one catching head lice:

- Avoid sharing hair brushes, combs, hats and fancy dress wigs
- Avoid direct head-to-head contact
- Discourage your child from playing with other people's hair
- Keep long hair tied up or plaited
- Checking your child's hair on a weekly basis

Remember that these suggestions should not get in the way of ensuring your child is able to have fun in their child care centre.

DEALING WITH SEVERE ALLERGIES

Leaving your child in care for the first time can be hard, and these feelings are likely to be worse if your child suffers from the life-threatening type of allergic reaction known as anaphylaxis.

With increasing incidences of allergies and no national guidelines for the management of anaphylaxis in schools, pre-schools or child care services, what are the child care options for parents of pre-school children with allergies?

This article will hopefully provide some answers.

Anaphylaxis is a generalised allergic reaction, which often involves more than one body system (e.g. skin, respiratory, gastro-intestinal and cardiovascular). A severe allergic reaction usually occurs within 20 minutes of exposure to the trigger and can rapidly become life threatening.

According to **Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia**, peanut allergies are the most common, followed by egg, cow's milk and tree nuts, such as cashews.

A recent report published in the Medical Journal revealed that the number of pre-schoolers with life-threatening food allergies has inexplicably soared in the last decade. Between 1994 and 2005,



the number of hospital admissions for severe allergic reactions rose from 39 in every million children to 194.

The child care environment

For the parents of children with anaphylaxis it may seem that home-based care such as offered by a nanny, au pair, parent or grandparent is the only option. However, this is not the case, many child care centres are well prepared to deal with children with allergies and offer staff training, anaphylaxis action plans and safe environments to protect children.

President of Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia, Maria Said, says that keeping children safe from an allergic reaction requires child care centres to reduce the environmental risks, offer staff training and maintain an action plan to ensure all staff know how to recognise and manage an emergency situation.

11 KEEPING YOUR CHILDREN HEALTHY IN CARE

"The best way to protect children is to ensure they are promptly and properly diagnosed. We encourage all child care facilities to access training by dedicated anaphylaxis educators and ensure that all staff receive annual training on preventing an anaphylactic reaction; recognising symptoms of a reaction and practice how to administer the lifesaving EpiPen adrenaline auto-injector."

For parents who have children with anaphylaxis in care it's important to maintain a constant line of communication with carers. You should:

- Inform staff of your child's diagnosis and its cause. Many services may be very experienced in dealing with children with allergies and staff may well have undergone training, however, it is still important to talk to the carers about the unique circumstances of your child's condition. Take the time to explain the primary triggers, how long a reaction takes to come on, how to deal with the reaction, how to calm your child and any other variables which you have discovered from parenting your child through a reaction.
- Discuss prevention strategies with staff. Most child care services will have stated policies and procedures for preventing and dealing with severe allergic reactions. Indeed, the ideal way for dealing with anaphylaxis is prevention! Ask staff how they enforce prevention strategies with other parents in the centre and how well enforced the prevention strategies are.
- Work with staff to develop an Individual Anaphylaxis Health Care Plan. This should be based on your experiences and will provide the child carers with unique information they can use to keep your child safe. You should also provide your child care service with an Anaphylaxis Action Plan that is signed by your child's doctor and has an up-to-date photograph.
- Another important factor is to ensure your child care service has a supply of your child's adrenaline auto-injector and you should check every once in a while to make sure the adrenaline has not expired.

The service you choose for your child should be willing to accommodate, within reason, an individualised plan for managing your child's allergies. This plan should be put together using the information supplied by you through the process described above and if there are points of disagreement between you and the service you could defer to your child's doctor for the deciding say.

According to ACECQA, an individualised action plan may depend on a range of variables including:

- Your child's age and understanding of the situation
- The ages of the other children in the service
- The severity of the allergy
- What your child is allergic to
- The care environment including: the ratio or children to carers, levels of staff training and experience

The upside of allergy rates increasing is that more people are aware of the problem and how to manage it.

This means that kids with allergies can safely participate in most, if not all, of the opportunities available to kids without allergies. To maximise the chances of your child enjoying a safe and happy time in child care there will need to be close and ongoing communication between you, your child care provider and your GP. This seems a small price to pay to ensure your child enjoys a full and active life in a high quality child care service.

Further reading

Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy (ASCIA)

Allergy & Anaphylaxis Australia



11 KEEPING YOUR CHILDREN HEALTHY IN CARE

STRESS REDUCTION STRATEGIES FOR CHILDREN IN CARE

Child care providers are well aware of the fact that the first three years of life are a critical period for children's emotional development and wellbeing.

New research has shown that recognising and helping children deal with stress during these early years will better prepare them for life's hurdles later on.

Associate Professor Dr Margaret Sims, from Perth's Edith Cowan University, has shown that good quality child care environments can actually reduce stress levels and may prevent children from developing behaviour problems in later life.



By studying levels of the stress hormone known as cortisol in children attending child care Professor Sims has shown that children's stress levels drop when they attend high quality child care centres

Child care providers can help babies and toddlers overcome stress by:

- (re)establishing a safe and routine-based environment which ensures children know what to expect in their day
- Helping children establish a sense of security and trust in their adult care givers
- (re)introducing laughter, joy, play and exploration into their lives'
- Supporting and comforting children who are upset or distressed

Kay Margetts from the University of Melbourne says it is extremely important for babies and toddlers to develop meaningful relationships with their care givers and that these relationships work to ensure children can sustain good relationships through their life.

11 KEEPING YOUR CHILDREN HEALTHY IN CARE

She says that strong relationships reduce stress levels and encourage the development of children's language, social, emotional and cognitive skills.

To achieve this in the child care environment Dr Margetts promotes the primary caregiver approach which sees child carers allocated to particular children over an extended period of time rather than a particular age group or room of children.

For example, a care giver would be responsible for the same children each week even though the children who make up that group might change on different days of the week and would be responsible for all aspects of care. Including meeting and greeting families, mealtimes, nappy changing, toileting, sleeping, playing, maintaining relationships with parents, record keeping and planning.

'The primary caregiver will know a few children and their families very well, and will know others a little,' says Dr Margetts.

In addition to reducing children's stress levels the primary caregiver approach:

- Helps children and adults form strong bonds and trusting relationships
- Encourages children to explore their environment and their relationships with others
- Assists children and adults to learn each other's rhythms and responses and to anticipate behaviours
- Fosters consistency with home care practices
- Ensures children who are not securely attached to their parents are able to develop an attachment with a compensatory adult
- Improves communication between parents and caregivers through the development of a relationship with a primary caregiver with who they can share information.

Dr Margetts claims it makes sense to limit the number of staff with whom an infant or toddler interacts with each day and says the primary caregiver approach enables this to happen.

'This approach enables staff to develop relationships with individual children, supports relationships with families, empowers staff and should reduce the stress experienced by children and staff and facilitate positive conditions for children's development,' she says.



Care for kids

CHILDCARE TAKEN CARE OF.

Published by

CareforKids.com.au
Level 1 F6 1-15 Barr St
Balmain NSW 2041

Copyright ©2018 CareforKids.com.au

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, or transmitted in any form by any means whatsoever without the prior permission of the publisher and copyright owner.

Although the publisher has tried to make the information as accurate as possible, they accept no responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by any person using this guide.

Acknowledgments

Thanks to: Bonnie Laxton Blinkhorn, Katherine Norris, Ridi Heslin and Claudia Canalicchio

Designed by Katherine Norris Design