

A Guide to Childcare Programs...

Listed below are brief descriptions of common types of childcare programs in New York State. Each program is regulated by the state Office of Children and Family Services. For specific information on regulations and capacity issues, please contact our office at 343-2344.

Programs You Can Choose From:

Day Care Centers provide care for more than six children at a time, not in a personal residence. These programs are licensed by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

Small Day Care Centers provide care for up to six children, not in a personal residence. These programs are licensed by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

Family Day Care Homes provide care for three to six children at a time in a residence and may add one or two school-age children. The maximum allowable number of children will depend on whether any infants are in care and if so how many. These programs are registered by the Child Care and Development Council.

Group Family Day Care Homes provide care for seven to twelve children at a time in a residence and may add two to four school-age children. The maximum allowable number of children will depend on whether there are any infants in care and if so how many. A provider must use an assistant when more than six children are present. These programs are licensed by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

Each of the programs listed above can serve children ages six weeks through twelve years and operate for more than three hours a day.

School-Age Child Care Programs provide care for more than six children from kindergarten through age twelve. They care for children during non-school hours and also may provide care during school vacation periods and holidays. These programs are registered by the Child Care and Development Council.

Other forms of legal childcare include:

Nursery Schools provide care for three hours a day or less. In New York City, the City Department of Health regulates these programs. A nursery school may voluntarily register with the State Education Department (SED).

Pre-Kindergartens are usually located in public schools, but can also be found in private schools or day care centers. They are supervised by the SED and the local school district.

Head Start Centers are targeted for preschool-age children from low-income families. They are federally funded and usually licensed as Day Care Centers. Head Start Centers are licensed by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.

Legally Exempt Care (Informal) provides care for one or two children at a time in addition to the provider's own children, usually in the provider's home. These providers are not required to register.

Maintaining Quality

There is no absolute guarantee of quality in childcare programs. However, several factors help to assure quality care in regulated programs:

Parent Involvement – As a parent, you are a key to quality childcare. You have the right to drop in at any time to observe the program or to see your child. You will probably see the provider often and have a good idea of how things are going in the program.

Adult-Child Ratios – Regulated programs must limit the number of children each adult cares for based on standards set in the regulations. These standards help to ensure that children are properly supervised and get all the attention they need.

Training and Experience – Regulated childcare providers must have prior experience caring for children and must receive ongoing training in areas such as safety, nutrition, and child abuse prevention.

Regulation and Oversight – Programs regulated by the state Office of Children and Family Services must be licensed or registered. With only a few exceptions, every program that cares for more than two children three hours or more per day must have a license or registration certificate.

To become licensed, providers must be 18 years of age or older, have at least 2 years of experience providing care, be certified in first aid and CPR, go through a background check, 15 hours of health and safety training, and two inspections.

When you visit a regulated child care facility, ask to see the license or registration certificate. You should also check the provider's history and complaint file by calling the State Office of Children & Family Services at 423-1202 for group family day care homes, or our office at 343-2344 for school age programs and family day care homes.

Inspections – Every licensed childcare program must be inspected at least once before each license renewal. At least 50% of all registered providers are inspected annually.

Complaints – The State Office of Children & Family Services (OCFS) maintains a statewide, toll-free Child Care Complaint Line at 1-800-732-5207. Anyone can file a complaint of a possible regulatory violation in a day care program by calling this number or the nearest regional OCFS office. If you have any concerns regarding any program, please contact our office at 343-2344.

Rates

The average cost for weekly care (Monday – Friday day time work hours) is \$130-150.