

Types of Child Care

Finding which type of child care is right for your child isn't easy and can be exhausting. But with careful consideration and good advice, you can confidently make a decision about the type of child care that is best suited for your child. Let's begin the quest with a basic understanding of what types of child care are available in Illinois.

In-Home Care

In-home care providers care for children in the child's home. This type of care can include live-in or live-out nannies and housekeepers. Most states do not regulate in-home caregivers, but some states do regulate nanny-placement agencies. The family assumes all responsibilities for paying salary, state and federal withholdings, and taxes. This is done either through the nanny agency or as a private employer.

Benefits/Limitations

- Convenient and flexible.
- Costly if only one child needs care (cost ranges: \$250 - \$450 per week per child).
- Cost effective if you have multiple children in need of care.
- May offer fewer opportunities to develop social skills with other children.
- You, as the private employer, are responsible for salary, taxes, and background checks.
- When provider is ill, other arrangements must be made.
- Qualified in-home care providers are in short supply.



Relative Care

Parents often choose to have relatives, friends, or neighbors care for their child. This care can be provided in the child's home or the caregiver's home. Parents believe that this arrangement provides a warmer, more loving environment for the child and the child will be more secure. Also, the cost of this care is comparable to or lower than other options if there is any cost at all.

Benefits/Limitations

- Parent and child have an established relationship with the caregiver which is built on trust and security.
- The care is being provided in a familiar environment.
- Flexible hours and cost
- When provider is ill, other arrangements must be made.
- Provider's age, health or other personal obligations may limit the types of developmentally appropriate activities available to the child.
- May offer fewer opportunities to develop social skills with other children.
- Parent and provider must establish a mutual agreement on care issues (health/safety, nutritional meals, etc.).

Family Child Care Homes

Family child care providers offer care for children in the provider's home. Family child care programs include licensed providers, license-exempt providers, and group child care homes. Licensed providers are required to maintain a minimal level of professional training each year and are subject to random visits from state licensing representatives. Not all family child care providers are required to have their program licensed by the State of Illinois (*see page 2, What Does Licensing Mean?*).

Benefits/Limitations

- Parents want to keep their child in a home-like environment.
- Parents may feel that smaller groups make their child feel healthier, happier and more secure.
- Provider may not provide care for a mildly ill child.
- Provider may provide a child development or preschool curriculum.

Family Child Care Homes **Benefits/Limitations (cont.)**

- A single adult is usually alone with the group of children (Licensed, License-exempt).
 - When provider is ill or on vacation, other arrangements must be made.
 - Hours and fees may vary, but tend to be less expensive than other types of care.
 - Child is allowed more flexibility to play and rest on different schedules.
 - Provider may offer flexibility for evening, weekend, and respite care.
 - Two staff members must be present when there are more than 8 children (*Group Home*).
 - Provider must have achieved 1 year of college level instruction or 1 year of professional work experience in the child care field (*Group Home*).
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Child Care Centers

Child Care Centers care for children in a “facility” type setting and typically care for a large number of children at one time. Centers usually group children into classrooms by age. All states require centers to be licensed. Many Centers choose to become nationally accredited which emphasizes the quality of their programs.

Benefits/Limitations

- Some parents feel more comfortable having their child in a larger group setting that have required licensing visits by state representatives because to them the program is safer and more dependable.
 - Parents may feel that programs with more staff, space, equipment, resources and organized activities, provide a better learning environment for their child.
 - There is less likelihood for care to be disrupted due to provider illness or emergency.
 - Most centers are open year-round.
 - High turnover of staff is common.
 - Some children do not adapt well to larger group settings.
 - Centers are not as flexible for early morning, evening, weekend, or respite care hours.
 - Facilities are subject to inspections for health, safety, and fire code compliance.
 - Infant/toddler care may not be offered.
 - Greater chance that child will be involved in child development or preschool curriculum.
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Preschools, Pre-Kindergarten, and Head Start Programs

Preschools, Preschool for Alls, and Head Start offer group programs primarily for 3 to 5 year old children. Both Preschool and Head Start programs can be licensed or license-exempt under similar regulations set for child care centers. **(For a list of local Head Start programs see page 33)**

Benefits/Limitations

- These programs provide an educational curriculum appropriate for children 3 to 5 years old.
- Child may be required to be toilet-trained.
- These programs usually have strict enrollment policies regarding ages served.
- Some programs are provided at no cost or reduced cost to low income families or children with special needs.
- These programs allow children an opportunity to socialize with other children of the same age.
- These programs usually have a limited number of hours available per week and usually summer hours are not available.
- Children are engaged in a variety of activities in more of a school-like setting.

School-Age Child Care Programs

School-age Child Care programs are arrangements offering care for school-age children before and after school hours, on non-school days during the school year and during the summer. A license may not be required depending on the location and type of program. These programs are usually offered in schools, community centers, YMCAs/ YWCAs, or at park and recreation programs.

Benefits/Limitations

- The program may be located at the child's school allowing for a positive transition from school to the child care program.
- The program can be highly structured and not allow the child a break from school.
- The group size can be large with limited supervision.
- Many programs transport children to and from school.
- Staff may be available to give homework assistance and provide tutoring.
- Field trips and special events are frequently offered.