

The  
Parents' Guide  
to  
Selecting Quality  
Child Care



Oklahoma Department of Human Services

Division of Child Care

# A Handbook For Parents

Choosing child care may be the most important decision you will make as a parent. Approximately 90 percent of a child's brain development occurs in the first three years of life. We know that children are influenced primarily by their parents and home environment, but the preschool child of parents who work full-time may spend a major portion of her waking hours in child care. The quality of those hours will shape a child's physical, social and intellectual development for years to come.

When possible, begin your search when you know you are expecting or adopting a child. At a minimum, plan on beginning the process at least four months before your child will need care. In some communities, child care providers have waiting lists as long as one year.

You can identify child care options by contacting the licensing staff at your local Oklahoma Department of Human Service (OKDHS) office or a Child Care Resource and Referral agency that will help match your needs with local providers. Locate the nearest resource and referral agency by calling the Oklahoma Child Care Resource and Referral Association (OCCRRA) at 1-888-962-2772 or check their website at [www.oklahomachildcare.org](http://www.oklahomachildcare.org). OKDHS offers a Child Care Locator which can help you find child care in your area. To access the Child Care Locator visit [www.OKDHS.org/childcarefind](http://www.OKDHS.org/childcarefind). You may also wish to check your local newspaper, telephone book or talk to friends and relatives to locate licensed care.

This handbook will help you choose a child care setting that best suits your child, your family and your work situation. Take time to be a smart consumer - you are making a critical investment!

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# Steps in Choosing Child Care

1. List the things you feel are important for your child and you, such as the type of care, atmosphere, hours and location.
2. Learn about the different kinds of child care and how to identify quality care (see page 5).
3. Collect names of potential child care providers (see page 2).
4. Screen several child care providers over the phone to determine openings, hours, number and ages of children in care, cost, services, etc.
5. Visit more than one program. Although an initial appointment is recommended, stop by unannounced to observe at different times of the day.
6. Look for the state license.
7. Look at all spaces used by children. Observe the caregivers and children and be sure to ask all of your questions during the visits.
8. Check references on your final choices.
9. Make an appointment to review the licensing file at the OKDHS office, or ask for a visit summary.
10. Take your child to visit the final choices.
11. Trust your intuition and your observations.
12. Read the provider's parent handbook or written policies and procedures carefully.
13. Have an alternative caregiver in case your child is ill or your provider goes on vacation or is closed.

# Child Care Options

After identifying your family's and child's needs, the next step is considering various child care options.

*Child Care Centers* are located in a variety of locations including buildings designed for child care, churches, houses and community centers. They operate more than 30 hours per week.

*Centers Providing Drop-in Services* care for children on an occasional basis where no child attends more than six hours per day for a maximum of 24 hours a week.

*Part-day Programs* care for children for more than 15 and up to 30 hours per week. These are generally preschool or mother's day out programs.

*Family Child Care Homes* offer care for up to seven children in the provider's own home.

*Large Family Child Care Homes* offer care for up to 12 children in the provider's own home.

*In-home Care* means hiring someone to come into your home and care for your child.

*Relative Care* may be in the child's or the relative's home.



# The Role of Licensing

The 1963 Oklahoma Child Care Facilities Licensing Act requires that all child care facilities be licensed by the Oklahoma Department of Human Services. Only programs that operate less than 15 hours per week and care provided by a relative or in the child's own home are exempt from the law.

Choosing a licensed home or center will help to ensure that your child is safe, that the caregivers are trained and that the facility meets minimum requirements. A license does not guarantee that the quality of a child care facility will meet every parent's or child's needs, but it does mean that a trained professional is working to help the staff meet minimum state requirements for a safe and suitable environment for your child.





# Licensing Staff

- Make periodic unannounced visits during the year to consult with caregivers and make sure they are meeting requirements for the state license.
- Provide parents with the names of child care providers in their area.
- Maintain case records on licensed providers that can be reviewed upon request by parents. (Names of all children and families are removed from these records to protect their privacy.)
- Investigate complaints that licensing requirements are not being met.
- Offer or sponsor training for child care providers.

You can help your caregiver by not requesting anything that will put her out of compliance with licensing requirements, such as taking more children than she is licensed for, asking her to use physical punishment or not keeping immunization records up-to-date.

You, the caregiver and the licensing staff can work together to ensure the best possible care for your child. As a parent, you have the primary responsibility for monitoring your child's care. As a team, we can strive for quality child care for all children.

# Reviewing a Licensing File

Licensing records are subject to the Oklahoma Open Records Act, which mandates that public records are open for public inspection unless they are required by law to be kept confidential. This means that the public has a right to see certain parts of a child care facility's licensing file, including records pertaining to unlicensed facilities. Before you make a final decision about where to place your child, you should contact the local OKDHS office, and make arrangements to view licensing records.

What you will see in a licensing file:

- The facility's application for a license
- Monitoring reports
- A summary of licensing complaint allegations and their findings
- Child Welfare complaint allegations regarding children in care and their findings
- Letters sent by licensing staff to the facility
- Letter granting or denying a waiver regarding criminal history
- Child Care Center Staff Summary Sheet and Staff Information Sheets on child care center employees

What you won't see in a licensing file:

- Names or information that discloses identities of children, their parents or relatives
- Criminal background checks or criminal history information
- Names of complainants, and the documentation of the discussion of the allegations
- Any previous Child Welfare history regarding the provider and their own children
- Social security numbers, federal identification numbers, and employee identification numbers
- Copies of computer checks of OKDHS records



# Reaching for the Stars Program

What is “Reaching for the Stars?” Reaching for the Stars is an OKDHS initiative designed to assist parents in identifying child care facilities that meet additional criteria above the minimum licensing requirements. The criteria include increased provider education, parent involvement methods, program evaluation, learning environment and substantial compliance with licensing requirements. Star certification levels range from 1-Star, those that meet minimum licensing requirements, to 3-Star, which includes national accreditation.

Who are the Stars in Oklahoma? They are the child care providers who are shaping the lives of children and the future of our state. The goal of OKDHS is for each provider to climb the Stars ladder, grow professionally and be recognized for their accomplishments.

The Stars program is not only for child care providers caring for children whose care is subsidized by the Department. From its inception, the Stars program has had three goals:

1. To increase the training and education of child care providers, thereby improving the overall quality of care.
2. To provide parents with a method to evaluate child care.
3. To increase the reimbursement that child care providers receive and create new slots for low-income families.

To find the Star rating of a child care facility, you can log onto the Child Care Locator on the Division of Child Care website ([www.okdhs.org/childcarefind](http://www.okdhs.org/childcarefind)). Each facility’s star rating is indicated next to its name. You can also check with your local licensing office or contact the resource and referral agency in your area.

# The Child Care Checklist

How to use the checklist:

It is important to review the checklist and identify which of the criteria are most important to you. Look for a child care facility that receives a high percentage of 'yes' answers on those criteria. It is important to know that if a facility receives a 'no' response, it may not mean that it is a poor quality facility. If you are unsure about what a 'no' response may mean in terms of quality, contact your local OKDHS Licensing office.



# Basics

A well-operated program functions smoothly under the direction of someone with knowledge of early childhood education as well as business skills. Providing written policies for parents and encouraging parent involvement may be two signs of a strong program.

YES NO

- |                          |                          |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is the program licensed?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is written information on program philosophy, hours, fees, vacations, etc., provided?                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are you welcome to visit the program at any time, to observe, eat lunch with your child or help with a special event? |

# Supervision

Learn how many children and caregivers are in your child's group, room or class. There should be sufficient staff so that children are never left unattended. Smaller group size results in more staff interaction with children, more focused activities by children and less conflict.

YES NO

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| ☐ | ☐ | Is there enough staff to meet children's needs? (Refer to a copy of licensing requirements to check minimum staff-child ratios.) |
| ☐ | ☐ | Is the size of the group comfortable for staff and children?   |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are classes combined at the beginning and end of the day when fewer children and staff are present?                              |



# Caregivers

The single most important element in child care is the caregiver. It is vital to look for someone with whom you are comfortable. To evaluate a caregiver, watch the children and see how they respond to her. Does the caregiver:

YES NO

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| ☐ | ☐ | Appear to be energetic, in good health and able to keep up with children?        |
| ☐ | ☐ | Seem calm, patient and gentle with children?                                     |
| ☐ | ☐ | Appear to be warm and friendly with a good sense of humor?                       |
| ☐ | ☐ | Greet children upon arrival and act happy to see them?                           |
| ☐ | ☐ | Understand what children can and want to do at different stages of growth?       |
| ☐ | ☐ | Respond promptly when children need attention?                                   |
| ☐ | ☐ | Appear child-oriented and speak to children at their eye-level?                  |
| ☐ | ☐ | Help the children feel good about themselves, their activities and other people? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Encourage children to express themselves in creative ways?                       |
| ☐ | ☐ | Understand how to stimulate children's learning?                                 |
| ☐ | ☐ | Call each child by name, treating each one as an individual?                     |
| ☐ | ☐ | Seem to be someone your child will enjoy being with?                             |
| ☐ | ☐ | Eagerly talk to parents about their child's daily experiences?                   |
| ☐ | ☐ | Seem to be someone you can develop a relaxed, sharing relationship with?         |
| ☐ | ☐ | Have training in child development, first aid and CPR?                           |
| ☐ | ☐ | Have experience in working with young children?                                  |
| ☐ | ☐ | If religious values are taught, are they acceptable to you?                      |

# Daily Activities

Daily activities are those events planned for children as part of their normal routine. Children need a range of activities, from group to individual play, from games to music, from quiet activities to noisy ones. Since young children learn by doing, their play areas must provide a creative atmosphere, plenty of space and a variety of equipment.

YES NO

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | Is there a balanced program of daily activities (free play, story time, naps, outside play, etc.)?                                  |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are there a variety of activities geared to the age levels and needs of children?   |
| ☐ | ☐ | Does the schedule show active and quiet times throughout the day?   |
| ☐ | ☐ | Is the play area cheerful, colorful and welcoming to children?  |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are there places to work alone, with a friend and in small groups?  |
| ☐ | ☐ | Is there a plentiful supply, within a child's reach, of sturdy, colorful, creative materials (games, books, puzzles, blocks, etc.)? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are girls and boys encouraged to participate in the same activities?  |





YES NO

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| ☐ | ☐ | Are children given opportunities to make choices?  |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are there opportunities for music and movement activities?   |
| ☐ | ☐ | Is children's artwork displayed where it is visible to children?   |
| ☐ | ☐ | Is there play equipment available to stimulate your child's imagination (dress-up clothes, housekeeping toys, etc.)? |
| ☐ | ☐ | Do children experience success frequently?   |
| ☐ | ☐ | Is television time limited, and then only to creative children's programs?   |
| ☐ | ☐ | Do they offer special birthday or holiday activities? If yes, do they agree with your values?                        |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are children allowed to finish what they are doing before they are expected to go on to something else?              |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are trips taken to nearby points of interest?  |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are activities for school-age children relaxed, recreational and appropriate for their interests, skills and needs?  |
| ☐ | ☐ | Do children look happy, active and engaged?  |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are children given the opportunity to play outdoors daily when the weather permits?                                  |

# Health and Safety

One of the major goals of child care is to protect children from harm and illness. As parents, we know that children are curious and love to explore, and that accidents can happen in a matter of seconds. With a large group of children to supervise, it is important that potential hazards be eliminated. Child care settings can also teach children healthy lifetime habits, such as hand washing and seat belt use.

YES NO

- |                          |                          |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are the rooms clean and free of hazards (check bathrooms, kitchen and all play areas)?                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are the rooms kept a comfortable temperature, well-ventilated and properly lighted?                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are any hazards within children's reach, such as medicines, cleaning products, matches or buckets of water? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are there any sharp edges, uncovered electrical outlets or open stairways?                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are there smoke detectors, fire extinguishers and protected heaters?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are fire drills held and emergency telephone numbers posted?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is furniture and indoor and outdoor play equipment clean, safe and in good repair?                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do children have individual sleeping spaces with clean bedding?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are infant cribs free of pillows, quilts, comforters, stuffed toys, bumper pads, etc?                       |

YES NO

- ☐ ☐ Is large outdoor playground equipment anchored and surrounded by a cushioned surface?
- ☐ ☐ Is the outdoor play area well-maintained and fenced or otherwise protected from traffic and other hazards?
- ☐ ☐ Are swimming pools and hot tubs fenced and inaccessible to children? Are children exposed to second-hand cigarette smoke?
- ☐ ☐ Are there pets around children? If yes, are they restricted from children's sleeping and eating areas? Do they appear to be healthy with current rabies vaccinations and pose no risk to children?
- ☐ ☐ Are children encouraged to wash their hands after using the bathroom and before meals?
- ☐ ☐ Are soap and paper towels within reach of children at hand washing sinks?
- ☐ ☐ Do caregivers wash their hands after diapering or assisting a child with toileting and wiping noses?
- ☐ ☐ If children are transported, are seat belts and safety seats used?



# Nutrition

Children need well-balanced meals for good physical, mental, and emotional development. Meals are also an important time for children to develop social skills.

YES NO

- |                          |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are children served nutritious meals and snacks?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is a current menu available?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do caregivers sit at tables with children during meals?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is mealtime relaxed, unhurried and pleasant?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are children allowed to serve themselves and get second helpings?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is food served in a manner that is appropriate for the child's age? For example, cut into small bites for very young children? |



# Guidance and Discipline

The goal of guidance and discipline is to help children develop self-control. Discipline should be educational in nature and appropriate to the child's age. Watch for or ask about the following:

YES NO

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| ☐ | ☐ | Does the staff anticipate and eliminate potential problems?  |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are children encouraged to cooperate with others, consider other children's feelings and solve problems by talking things out?   |
| ☐ | ☐ | Does the staff recognize and encourage good behavior more often than correcting misbehavior?   |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are reasonable, consistent limits set for the protection of children?  |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are the limits simple, understandable and clearly explained to children?   |
| ☐ | ☐ | Is the staff gentle but firm in helping children understand the rules?   |
| ☐ | ☐ | Do the caregivers redirect children by giving alternatives when behavior is unacceptable?  |
| ☐ | ☐ | If children are removed from the group as a means of regaining self-control, are the periods of time out age-appropriate? (One minute of time out for each year of a child's age is recommended – not to exceed five minutes.) |
| ☐ | ☐ | Does the program prohibit all forms of physical punishment; verbal abuse such as yelling, criticizing or comparing children; and withholding or forcing of food?   |
| ☐ | ☐ | Are the caregiver's beliefs on discipline acceptable to you?   |

# Infant and Toddler Care

During these first years, children learn whether or not the world is a safe place where their needs will be met. Parents must carefully observe the child care setting since their child cannot tell them about the care they receive.



YES NO

- |                          |                          |  |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do caregivers spend time and seem to enjoy cuddling, playing with and talking to children?           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is feeding and diapering done in a loving, patient manner?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are infants held while being bottle-fed?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are caregivers supportive of a mother who is breast-feeding?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is there a policy on parents providing food and formula for infants?                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are records on feeding, sleeping and diapering available to parents on a daily basis?                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are diapers changed when wet?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are sanitary diaper-changing methods followed and the caregiver's hands washed after each diapering? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are there potty chairs or child-size toilets available?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do the caregivers support and encourage children during the potty training process?                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is there enough space for children to explore and develop motor skills?                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Is there a carpeted or soft area for infants to lay, roll and crawl?                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are infants and toddlers taken outside?  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are infants placed on their backs when sleeping?   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are infants given opportunity for "tummy time" to develop muscle strength and coordination?          |



# Children with Special Needs

All children have special needs...some more than others. Finding care for a child with special needs can be especially difficult. There are state and federal programs designed to provide help for children with disabilities. Call your local OKDHS office for more information. When seeking child care, observe or ask about the following:

YES NO

- ☐ ☐ Do caregivers encourage children's acceptance of each other?
- ☐ ☐ Are activities adapted to allow everyone to participate?
- ☐ ☐ Are caregivers able to provide extra assistance as needed during activities?
- ☐ ☐ If necessary, will the environment be adapted to meet your child's needs?
- ☐ ☐ What specialized training do caregivers have?

If you need assistance in paying for child care, you may qualify for child care assistance through the Oklahoma Department of Human Services. A Special Needs reimbursement rate is available to providers who care for children with disabilities. This special needs rate is higher than the reimbursement rate for other children. Contact your local OKDHS office to apply for child care assistance.



# Other Questions

Depending on whether you are interviewing a family child care home provider or a center director, the following questions may help to clarify your decision:

- Tell me about yourself.
- How long have caregivers worked in the program?
- Will you be providing care for at least another year?
- What would you do in a medical emergency, such as if a child was choking?
- Will anyone I haven't met be caring for the children?
- Are the children around any other adults?
- Tell me what a typical day would be like for my child.
- How would you handle a preschooler who refuses to eat lunch?
- What are some things you hope my child will learn here? (Look for answers such as independence, to play with others, to enjoy books and a sense of curiosity, rather than academic goals).
- How do you handle discipline problems?
- Have you or anyone in your household or facility ever been involved in a child welfare investigation?
- What credentials, experience and training do the caregivers have?
- What is your policy regarding sick children?
- Is the program closed at certain times of the year?
- What is the policy regarding payment for a child who is sick or misses certain days?
- Can I have some names and telephone numbers of other families whose children you have cared for (past and present)?

# Warning Signs

Knowing what you should not see in a child care setting is almost as important as knowing what should be there. The following are examples of things you should never see. If you do, it may be a warning that this is not the setting for your child.

You should never see:

- A caregiver physically discipline a child (hitting, shaking, spanking).
- Unattended crying babies or children left unsupervised.
- A child left out of sight and hearing of other children as a form of punishment.
- Babies left in one place, i.e., cribs, playpens, swings or infant seats, for long periods of time.
- Bottles propped to feed babies.
- Children being forced into potty training.
- Caregivers making fun of children for any reason.
- Children fighting without adults intervening.
- Food used as a bribe or punishment.
- Use of tobacco products during the hours of child care.
- A child scolded harshly or embarrassed in front of other children.
- A child left in a wet or dirty diaper too long.
- Parents being told to drop their child off at the door or to call before visiting.

# Warning Signs (continued)

If you suspect problems, drop by unannounced or arrive a little later or earlier than expected to see how the caregiver and your child are doing. Talk with your child about his or her experiences each day. Take time periodically to talk to the director about your child's progress and emotional well-being. Children may have difficulty separating from you in the morning, but generally once you have said your good-byes and have left, the tearfulness goes away. If your child exhibits unusual or persistent problems after a reasonable period of time, take a closer look. Here are some signs of potential problems:

- Changes in sleeping, eating or talking.
- Child does not want to go to child care.
- Child does not want to be near the caregiver.
- Unusual crying.
- Clinging to you when you leave and excessive crying which lasts after you are gone.

It is your responsibility to discuss with your child's caregiver any concerns that you have and try to identify solutions. Make sure your expectations are clearly understood. Lack of communication can lead to a build-up of tensions and affect everyone's sense of well being. Parents and caregivers should work together as partners to ensure that each child's individual needs are met.

If your specific concern involves non-compliance with licensing requirements and is not corrected through your discussions with the caregiver, you may file a complaint with the licensing staff for your county. Upon your request, you will receive a follow-up contact after the investigation has been completed. If your efforts do not make a difference, you may need to consider finding a different child care setting. Every child has different needs, so trust your instincts.

# Making the Transition

Once you've chosen a provider, it's time to prepare your child for the new setting. It is important for you to be comfortable with the setting as your child may sense it if you are not. Take your child to visit the home or center. Spend some time with him exploring the environment, meeting other children and getting to know the provider. When it is time to take him there for care, tell him he will be going back to the place he visited before.

Other helpful ideas include:

- Consult with the caregiver on ways to ease your child's transition, i.e., spending time there during the first week, bringing a favorite item from home, etc.
- Tell your child what he or she will be doing during the day ("You will have play time with the other children, then you will get lunch. After your nap, you will get to play outdoors.")
- Allow plenty of time in the mornings to get ready.
- Say goodbye each day rather than slipping away. Children need to know that you have gone away temporarily, not just disappeared.
- Call during the day to check in.
- Pick your child up when you said you would.
- Try to alter your child's nap time at home to match the new arrangement.

# Parental Involvement

Parents and caregivers should work together as partners to ensure that each child's individual needs are met. Your interest and involvement are essential during the years your child is in child care. Look for and ask about opportunities to be involved in your child's daily life. Share your talents, skills or interests:

- Read a book to your child's class.
- Volunteer to go on field trips.
- Ask teachers about recyclable items you can save for their arts and crafts activities.
- Assist with creating or providing information for parent boards or newsletters.
- Assist with special activities such as seasonal parties.
- Coordinate activities for children and families.
- Attend parent meetings.

A great way to get started when your child is new is to spend some time in the classroom reading to children or singing and dancing with them. Stay a little longer in the morning and eat breakfast or come for lunch with them. This will give you the opportunity to see your child interacting with the caregiver and the other children. It is also a time for you, the caregiver and the children to get to know each other.



# Child Abuse

Although child abuse rarely occurs in child care settings, parents should take steps to protect their child from abuse. Child abuse and neglect can be physical, emotional, verbal or sexual and is defined as harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare.

Any person who suspects that a child has been abused or neglected or is in danger of being abused or neglected is mandated by law to report it. This includes caregivers, teachers, relatives and neighbors. A person making a report in good faith is immune from both civil and criminal liability.

A report can be made to any county office of the Oklahoma Department of Human Services or to the Child Abuse Hotline, 1-800-522-3511. Although it is helpful to provide your name and phone number when reporting child abuse, a report can be filed anonymously. The person making the report does not need to prove the abuse. Investigation and validation of child abuse reports are the responsibility of child welfare workers.

To reduce children's risk of abuse, you can:

- Take time to listen to them, discuss their activities and feelings, and encourage them to come to you with problems or questions.
- Take responsibility for their safety, knowing whom they are with and what they are doing.
- Respect your children's feelings and make them feel special, important and loved.

# Reducing Childhood Illnesses

Children who are around other children may come in contact with many different illnesses. Although children may become ill more often when first entering child care, they will be developing immunities that will protect them later when they start school. There are several steps that you as a parent can take to help prevent the spread of illness.

Have your child immunized. Because young children in group care are exposed to various illnesses, all children in child care need to have current immunizations to protect them, their families, the other children and the caregivers. As a general rule, healthy children between the ages of 12 months and five years require at least:

- Three doses of Hepatitis B vaccine;
- Two doses of Hepatitis A vaccine (due between 2 and 5 years old);
- Four doses of DTP vaccine;
- One to four doses of HbCV (HIB), depending on the child's first dose;
- Three doses of Polio vaccine;
- One dose each of measles, mumps and rubella vaccines administered on or after the first birthday;
- One dose of Varicella (or the Chicken Pox vaccine).

Teach your child to wash his or her hands with soap and water after toileting and before eating.

If your child becomes sick while in care, pick him or her up as soon as possible. Keep a child at home if he or she has diarrhea, vomiting, fever, severe cough or a rash. This may require advance arrangements for a substitute caregiver for the time your child is ill. Let the child care provider know what the illness was so that she can watch other children for symptoms.

# Tips for Parents

1. To ensure a safe arrival, children should be brought inside the home or center by an adult and taken to their classroom. Unless this is done, the teacher may not be aware of your child's arrival.
2. Help childproof the parking area. Always turn off your car and remove the keys. Do not leave valuables unlocked in your car; they could be stolen. Never leave children unattended in the car. Be aware of other children and drive cautiously.
3. Do not send your child with toys, food or money without the caregiver's permission.
4. Dress your child in comfortable clothes suitable for active play and creative arts activities (open-toed shoes are impractical and may be unsafe). Licensing requirements state that children should play outdoors daily as weather permits. Dress your child appropriately for the weather. Leave a change of clothes in case of accidents.
5. Let the caregiver know if any information on the child record card has changed, such as a change in work telephone number, who can pick up the child, or an immunization update.
6. Always sign a permission slip with specific instructions before leaving medication for your child.
7. Label all baby food jars, bottles and medication with your child's name to reduce confusion. Provide unopened containers of baby food.
8. Label your child's coat, hat, swimsuit, etc., with his or her name.

# Tips for Parents (continued)



9. Be supportive of the caregivers' efforts to teach your child new skills. Practice new skills such as toilet-training at home.
10. Always pick your child up on time. If an emergency arises and you will be late, call and let them know.
11. Children frequently misbehave as soon as their parents arrive – discuss with the caregiver which of you will set the limits during this transition time.
12. Pay on time – caregivers and centers also have financial obligations to meet!
13. Be careful in discussing any problems or concerns in front of your child.
14. Offer important information about your child to the caregiver. For example, if your child has not been sleeping or eating well, if there are any unusual stressors on your child, or if your child is on medication.

# Resources

## Financial Help

If you need assistance paying for child care, the Oklahoma Department of Human Services may be able to help you through the child care assistance program. It is designed to assist low-income parents who are working or enrolled in an education or training program or families of children with disabilities. Contact your local OKDHS county office for more information or view eligibility information at [www.okdhs.org/childcare](http://www.okdhs.org/childcare).

## Resource and Referral Agencies

Child care resource and referral agencies can provide referrals to child care providers in your community that meet your family's needs. To obtain additional information on resource and referral agencies in your area, call the Oklahoma Child Care Resource and Referral Association at 1-888-962-2772 or on the web at [www.oklahomachildcare.org](http://www.oklahomachildcare.org).

## Licensing Services

You may contact a licensing staff member if you wish to obtain a list of licensed child care providers, review a child care facility's case record or file a complaint. Licensing staff can also provide you with a copy of the minimum licensing requirements, information about the Reaching for the Stars program, as well as other information on child care. Call your local OKDHS office to obtain the name and telephone number of the licensing staff for your area.

You may also visit the OKDHS website at [www.okdhs.org/childcarefind/](http://www.okdhs.org/childcarefind/) to view the Child Care Locator. This is a service to assist you in locating child care in your area that meets your specific needs.

## Accreditation

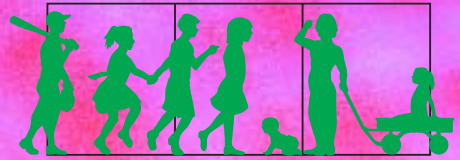
Some child care facilities are accredited by a national accrediting system, such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children or the National Association for Family Child Care. Many quality programs are not accredited. However, accreditation does show the provider has a strong commitment to the profession and has demonstrated the ability to provide quality care.

Contact your  
OKDHS Child Care Licensing staff  
at your local OKDHS office.

Oklahoma Department of Human Services  
Division of Child Care  
P.O. Box 25352  
Oklahoma City, OK 73125  
(405) 521-3561  
1-800-347-2276



OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES



DIVISION OF  
*Child Care*

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