

Choosing Child Care

A Guide to Licensed
and Approved Child Care in Alberta



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Starting Your Search

This child care brochure offers tools to help you in your search for child care. The Telephone Interview Planner and the Child Care Program Visit Checklist, located in the centre of this brochure, can be removed for your convenience. As you begin this important journey with your child, remember – you know your family’s needs better than anyone else. Start your search early and be prepared to spend time researching your options. Make your final decision only when you feel confident and comfortable with your choice.



Alberta Human Services is pleased to provide parents with this brochure to help you choose the child care program that will best meet your family’s and child’s needs.

Thinking About Your Needs



The first step is to take a look at the unique needs of your family situation. It is important to remember that there is no “one size fits all” solution when it comes to choosing child care.

Child care comes in a number of options, ranging from day care, pre-school, and out-of-school care programs where care is provided in a larger group setting, to group family child care and family day homes where there are fewer children cared for in a home setting. Before you begin your search you may want to consider the following to help you identify your child care needs:

- Do you want all of your children to attend the same program?
 - Part-time options may be a consideration.
 - The availability of infant care may be a consideration.
- Do you prefer a smaller setting, or a family setting for child care?
- What hours of service would accommodate your family's schedule and child care needs?

- Do you need a location that is accessible to your home or work? (e.g. on a bus route).
- Do you require transportation for your children to and from school?
- Do you prefer a program that offers meals and snacks or would you prefer to provide your own?
- Do you require child care for children with disabilities?
- Are you willing to volunteer at the program?
- Do you want to use a program that is participating in Alberta Child Care Accreditation?
- What amount of program fees are affordable for your family?

Once you have identified your family's child care needs, you will be ready to search for and consider the options in your community.

Considering Options

LICENSED CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

Alberta's licensed child care programs must meet the requirements laid out in the *Child Care Licensing Act* and the Child Care Licensing Regulation. These rules and standards make sure children's health and safety needs are being met in the following licensed program categories:

- Day Care;
- Pre-school;
- Out-of-School Care; and
- Group Family Child Care.

Alberta Human Services, through child and family services regularly inspects regulated child care programs.

If you would like more information about the *Child Care Licensing Act* and the Child Care Licensing Regulation, copies can be found online at www.qp.alberta.ca, or by calling 780-427-4952 (toll-free in Alberta at 310-0000).

Child and family services also offer support for children with disabilities. To learn more about available supports, please contact your local child and family services as listed on the last page of this booklet or by using our online tool at www.humanservices.ca/services-near-you/15010.html

DAY CARE PROGRAMS

Day care programs offer care to infants, pre-school and kindergarten children.

Financial help is available to eligible families through the Child Care Subsidy Program. Please refer to page eleven for more information.

PRE-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Pre-school programs provide care and supervision for children for four hours in a row or less per day. Financial help is available to eligible stay-at-home parents for their pre-school children through the Child Care Subsidy Program. Please refer to page eleven for more information.

Considering Options

OUT-OF-SCHOOL CARE PROGRAMS

Licensed out-of-school care programs provide care for kindergarten to school-aged children before and after school, during the lunch hour or when schools are closed.

APPROVED FAMILY DAY HOMES

Family day home programs offer parents the option of choosing child care that is provided in a home setting. Care is monitored by a contracted family day home agency to ensure the health, safety and well being of children. Homes displaying the “smiling red door” logo are private residences offering an approved family day home service that is monitored and supported by a government contracted family day home agency.



Alberta Human Services contracts with approved family day home agencies that recruit and provide training to family day home providers. Family day home agencies assist parents in choosing a home for their child(ren) and monitor individual family day homes to make sure the standards of care are

being met. Approved family day home providers may care for up to six children with no more than three under three-years-old and no more than two under two-years-old, including the provider’s own children. Providers may also offer flexible hours of care including before and after school. Fees are usually set by the family day home agency. Financial help is available for eligible children through the Child Care Subsidy Program. Please refer to page eleven for more information.

For information on ministry standards for approved family day homes please visit our website to view the Family Day Home Standards Manual at:

www.humanservices.alberta.ca/family-community/child-care.html

GROUP FAMILY CHILD CARE

Group family child care programs offer care in a private residence. There are typically between seven and 10 children with two caregivers. Group family child care programs are suited for children aged 0-12 and offer care before, during or after school.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

All of Alberta’s child care programs set their own policies related to fees, notice required to withdraw a child, holiday closures, hours of operation, and options for part-time and drop-in care. When considering a program you may want to request a copy of these policies.

Finding Child Care Programs in Your Community



To start your search, make a list of child care programs in the area where you hope to place your child. If you have already decided which type of program you want to place your child in, you may wish to limit your search to only that option.

Lists of all licensed and approved child care programs are available from:

- Your local child and family services (please refer to the last page for contact information); and

- Alberta Human Services online “lookup” service at www.humanservices.alberta.ca/family-community/child-care.html which helps to narrow your search by entering the postal code area and type of child care program needed.

Another good way to begin your search is to ask family, friends and neighbours for referrals.

Contacting Child Care Programs



Once you have decided on a few possible programs, it is a good idea to make your first contact by telephone. Think of this call as your first interview with the caregiver. Plan your questions before you contact the child care program and be sure to include questions that are important to your family. The goal of your first contact is to see which child care program offers the services best suited to your family's child care needs. For example, if you have decided you are interested in a licensed day care program for your 10-month-old, you will need to find out if the program has an infant program and whether it is currently accepting infants.

You can use the Telephone Interview Planner provided in the centre of this

booklet as a handy place to jot down the questions you wish to ask. Ask each child care provider the same list of questions and write down their answers so you can review them later. At the end of each telephone interview, decide if you would like to book an appointment to visit the child care program in person. When visiting the child care program, you may wish to use the Child Care Program Visit Checklist provided in the centre of this booklet as a guide to help you know what to look for when you get there. It is important to note that licensing requires programs to post their inspection reports and make records available to parents at reasonable times. You may wish to ask to see these.

Choosing Quality Care

Look for signs of quality care in the following three areas when you visit the child care program:

- Caregiver/child relationships;
- Daily child care program; and
- Physical environment.

CAREGIVER/CHILD RELATIONSHIPS

The early years in a child's life are viewed as the beginning stages to lifelong learning. A child's earliest experiences and interaction with adults and other children play a key role in a child's development. Caring, qualified caregivers play an important role in promoting social, physical, emotional and cognitive development of children. During your visit to the child care program, watch the caregiver interact with the children and ask yourself the following questions:

Does the caregiver:

- Call children by name, including your child?
- Listen to children when they speak, and respond with interest and respect?
- Show flexibility in meeting the different needs of all the children?
- Encourage problem-solving?
- Encourage independence?
- Offer choices to the children?
- Set reasonable limits for behaviour and respond to inappropriate behaviour in a fair and consistent way?

DAILY CHILD CARE PROGRAM

Child care programs provide a developmentally appropriate environment for each child enrolled in the program. It is important to provide quality programming and a stimulating environment that meets each child's developmental needs.

Does the program:

- Offer a variety of activities?
- Limit the use of television and videos?
- Provide choices for children who do not require a nap?
- Include quiet as well as noisy time?
- Include cultural traditions?
- Let children help prepare simple meals and snacks?
- Encourage children to take part in basic life skills such as washing hands, hanging up their own clothing, and doing up zippers?

Your observations in programs caring for infants should indicate that:

- Infants are held and carried frequently;
- Adults respond quickly to infants' cries;
- Adults frequently talk with, sing to and read to infants; and
- Adults adjust to infants' individual feeding and sleeping schedules.

Choosing Quality Care

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Child care standards require approved family day homes and licensed child care programs to have adequate indoor and outdoor space that meets safety requirements for children of different ages. Keep in mind that the physical environment will look different from one child care program to another.

As you observe the child care space ask yourself:

- Are there areas that are soft and cozy as well as areas that invite messy play?
- Are there both active play and quiet play areas?
- Is the child care space free from obstructions and hazardous materials?
- Is the room/area easy to supervise?

ANOTHER SIGN OF QUALITY CARE IS ALBERTA'S CHILD CARE ACCREDITATION PROGRAM.

Accredited family day home agencies, out-of-school care programs and day care programs provide a level of excellence in child care that goes beyond provincial regulatory requirements.

Licensed and approved programs that are accredited will display the following logo:



For more information on accreditation, or to view a list of all accredited child care programs, visit the association's website at www.aelcs.ca.

Funding



You may qualify for a subsidy to offset the cost of your child care program depending on your income, your reason for needing child care and the size of your family. An additional subsidy may be available for parents who work non-traditional hours and require extended hours of child care outside of regular hours. The following funding may help you in paying for child care.

CHILD CARE SUBSIDY PROGRAM

Alberta's Child Care Subsidy Program provides financial support to help low- and middle-income families with the cost of the following child care programs:

- Approved family day homes;
- Licensed day care programs;
- Licensed out-of-school care;
- Licensed group family child care;
- Licensed pre-school; and
- Approved early childhood development programs.

KIN CHILD CARE SUBSIDY

This program provides financial support to parents who choose to have a relative care for their children while they go to work or school.

To find out if you qualify for one of these funding programs, contact your local child and family services office (see last page for a list of offices) or use the online estimator tool to receive a confidential subsidy estimate at

www.humanservices.alberta.ca/family-community/child-care.html

Staying Actively Involved



Choosing a child care option and enrolling your child is the start of an important new relationship.

You will be working in partnership with your child care provider; however, you will always have the main responsibility for your child's care.

It's important to talk regularly with your child, as well as the people who care for your child. When you pick up or drop off your child, take a few minutes to talk with the caregiver. Ask about the day and make

sure you share information with your child care provider that may be important to your child's care. Talk with your child about what he/she did during the day and participate in activities whenever you can.

View and ask questions about licensing inspection reports and documents you see posted on the program's premises. Licensing staff sign these reports and documents so you will be able to identify the licensing staff who visited the program.

If You Have Concerns

Staying actively involved and talking regularly with your child care provider may prevent potential problems.

Children adjust to change in different ways. Some will take a few days to adjust to a child care setting, while others may take a few weeks. You know your child better than anyone else. If, after a reasonable amount of time, your child is still troubled about leaving home, or seems genuinely unhappy, there may be a problem.

Do not ignore your concerns. There is nothing more important than making sure your child is safe, healthy and happy when you are away. Start by having a straightforward and honest conversation with the caregiver who has primary responsibility for your child's care. Share your concerns and ask questions. Agree on a plan of action to help improve the

situation and set timelines. If the problem cannot be resolved, or if you no longer feel good about the care your child is receiving, the best solution may be to change your child care arrangement.

If your child is being cared for in an approved family day home or in a licensed child care setting and you believe that standards are not being met, take immediate action. Call your local child and family services. Please refer to the list of child and family services offices on the last page of this booklet. Every concern is taken seriously.

If you know or suspect that a child is being abused, you must report it – it is the law! You can make a report any time, day or night, by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-387-KIDS (5437).

Parent Resources



If you have questions about child care programs in your community, or are looking for other types of parent support, the following community resources are available.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

The child and family services in your area is your primary resource for any questions related to child care options or child care subsidies. Look at the next page of this brochure for a list of all the child and family services offices in the province.

PARENT LINK CENTRES

Parent Link Centres are located throughout Alberta. Every centre is designed to meet the needs of parents and families in the

community and offer support for parents in four key areas:

- Early childhood development and care;
- Parent education;
- Family support; and
- Information and referral services.

Alberta Human Services has also trained staff at these centres to deliver the Triple P – Positive Parenting Program. Many centres offer evening and weekend hours of service. To find the Parent Link Centre nearest to you, contact your local child and family services or check the online directory at www.parentlinkalberta.ca.

Child and Family Services Offices

SOUTH REGION

709, Lethbridge Centre Tower
400 4 Avenue S
Lethbridge, Alberta T1J 4E1
Tel: 403-381-5543
Fax: 403-381-5791

Rm 101, 346 3 Street SE
Medicine Hat, Alberta T1A 0G7
Tel: 403-529-3753
Fax: 403-528-5244

CALGARY REGION

Westmount Regional Office
140, 4820 Richard Rd. SW
Calgary, Alberta T3E 6L1
Phone: 403-297-8033
Fax: 403-297-7340

CENTRAL REGION

3rd Floor, Bishop's Place
4826 Ross Street
Red Deer, Alberta T4N 1X4
Phone: 403-341-8640
Fax: 403-340-7673

EDMONTON REGION

7th Floor, 108 Street Building
9942 - 108 Street
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2J5
Phone: 780-427-0444
Fax: 780-427-1622

NORTH CENTRAL REGION

Box 4742
2nd Floor, Administrative Building
5143-50 Street
Barrhead, AB
T7N 1A6
Phone: 780-305-2440
Fax: 780-305-2439

NORTHWEST REGION

4th Floor, 214 Place South
10130-99 Avenue
Grande Prairie, Alberta T8V 3N4
Phone: 780-538-5148
Fax: 780-538-5137

NORTHEAST REGION

4th Floor, Provincial Building
9915 Franklin Avenue
Fort McMurray, Alberta T9H 2K4
Phone: 780-743-7449
Fax: 780-743-7474

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Child Care Checklist

This checklist will help you to look for important indicators of quality child care. Space is provided for you to note your observations when deciding which child care program is right for your family.



Choosing Child Care

Telephone Interview Planner

You can use this planner to help organize your questions and record information from your interview with child care programs. You may wish to make additional copies of this planner.



Child Care Program:

Phone

Address

Contact Name

Questions/Responses for the Child Care Program

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Outcome of the telephone interview

Will visit the program

Yes

No

My child can visit with me

Yes

No

Date: _____ Time: _____

Child Care Program:

Phone

Address

Contact Name

Questions/Responses for the Child Care Program

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Outcome of the telephone interview

Will visit the program

Yes

No

My child can visit with me

Yes

No

Date: _____ Time: _____

Child Care Program:

Phone

Address

Contact Name

Questions/Responses for the Child Care Program

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Outcome of the telephone interview

Will visit the program

Yes

No

My child can visit with me

Yes

No

Date: _____ Time: _____