

First Steps

Child Care Options
for your Family



illinois
action for
children



We're Here to Help

There are many joys of parenting. However, for many parents it can be challenging to find quality, convenient, and affordable child care.



From child care centers, to family child care homes, to in-home child care, Illinois Action for Children's Child Care Referral Database has thousands of child care providers that can create a safe and nurturing environment for your child when you can't be with her.

Illinois Action for Children's team of Child Care Consultants are ready to help you discover all of your child care options, and find a solution that works for you.

We do not provide recommendations but we will supply you with a list of customized referrals. We encourage you to visit providers to select one that best suits your needs.



Does the child care arrangement meet my needs?

- Is there availability for child care during the hours I need it?
- Does the cost of the care fit within my budget?
- Is the location convenient?
- Are there openings in the program for my child now?
- A satisfactory staff-to-child ratio?
- Cleanliness, comfort, and safety?
- A bright and pleasant atmosphere?
- Healthy meals and snacks?
- Rest areas and a bed for each child?
- Smoke detectors and fire extinguishers?
- Plenty of age-appropriate toys and learning materials?

Does the child care environment provide...

Making a decision for the care of your child is a big one. With so many options, it can be difficult to determine the best solution for your family. Below you'll find a handy check-list of key items that you should consider as you are making your child care decision.

Things to Consider When Looking for Child Care



How qualified is the child care provider?

- Experience?
 - Patience, warmth, and responsiveness to children?
 - A professional attitude and approach to care?
 - Certification in CPR and First Aid?
 - The ability to offer individual attention to my child?
 - Up-to-date training and/or any early childhood education certifications?
 - Opportunities for parent involvement?
 - Practices in place for parent communication?
 - A low rate of staff turnover?
 - Written policies procedures?
- Do they have...
- Tuition/payment schedules and fees including: deposits, late fees, sick/vacation payments, registration fees, field trips, other fees.
 - Can you access the facility as a parent?
 - Professional references for the provider.
 - Schedule of closures, holidays, and other times child care will not be provided.
 - Health, illness and emergency policies.
 - Special circumstances for your child (food preferences, allergies, habits, or medical needs).
 - How your child will transition into the program?
 - Policy for late pick up.
 - Vaccination policy.

Other key questions you'll want to ask about...

First Steps for Finding Child Care

Step 1. Call: 312.823.1100 or email referrals@actforchildren.org

Step 2. Discuss

Talk to your Child Care Consultant about your needs and preferences. They will help you find an arrangement that works for your family.
All information is confidential.

Step 3. Review

Your Child Care Consultant will send you materials, including a personalized list of child care options, child development fact sheets and general guidelines to help you choose the best child care option for your family.
The list will contain referrals, not recommendations.

Step 4. Visit

We recommend that you visit several child care programs before you make a final decision, to make sure that you are comfortable with the child care setting and caregiver(s).

Do You Need Financial Assistance to Pay for Your Child Care?

The Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) makes it possible for families who qualify to receive financial assistance in paying for child care. Parents must meet the State of Illinois' income and family size guidelines.

Illinois Action for Children can help you determine your CCAP eligibility and complete the application.

Simply give us a call at 312.823.1100 or visit one of our walk-in locations:

Central / West Side
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday
(8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.)

1340 S. Damen
3rd Floor
Chicago, IL 60608

North Side / Uptown
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday –
By Appointment Only

4753 N. Broadway
1st Floor
Chicago, IL 60640

South Side / Chatham
Monday, Tuesday (8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.)
Thursday (10:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.)
Friday – By Appointment Only

8741 S. Greenwood
Suite 300
Chicago, IL 60619

Understanding Your Child Care Options

CHILD CARE CENTERS

Child care centers provide care for groups of children. There are two types of child care centers, “licensed” and “license-exempt”.

Child Care Centers Offer:

- Daily planned activities
- Opportunities for building social skills
- Staff trained in child development and, CPR and First Aid
- More availability for children over two years old
- Consistent, year-round schedules that do not fluctuate

Child Care Centers May Not

Always Offer:

- Flexible hours and days of operation
- The ability to bring your child there when he/she is ill



TYPES OF CHILD CARE CENTERS

FAMILY CHILD CARE

Family child care is offered in the home of the child care provider. There are three types of family child care, “licensed homes”, “group homes”, and “license-exempt homes”.

Family Child Care offers:

- A home environment
- Daily planned activities
- Opportunities for flexible schedules
- Siblings cared for together
- Care from a single, consistent caregiver
- Mixed ages of children
- More availability for infant care
- Licensed providers are trained in CPR and First Aid
- Lower staff to child ratios

Family Child Care

May Not Always offer:

- Caregivers with a formal education background
- A consistent schedule of care (for example if the provider becomes ill or goes on vacation)
- Admission of children who are sick



TYPES OF FAMILY CHILD CARE

IN-HOME CHILD CARE

An in-home child care provider cares for your child in your home. This caregiver could be a nanny, a relative, or an au pair. This type of care is not regulated by DCFS licensing standards. As a parent, you are the employer of the caregiver.

In-Home Care Offers:

- Children the comfort and stability of being in their own homes
- Potential for a more flexible arrangement
- Individualized care
- Ongoing care, even if your child is sick
- Potential costs savings for families with several children requiring care
- Control over selecting the individual(s) who will care for your child
- Convenience of not having to take and pick up your child from another location



Call for Your Child Care Consultation

Illinois Action for Children's Child Care Consultants are ready to help you find the child care solution that meets your needs. Call for your FREE child care consultation, today!

Child Care Consultation Hours
Monday—Thursday: 8:30 a.m.—4:30 p.m.
Friday: 8:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m.

312.823.1100
referrals@actforchildren.org
www.actforchildren.org

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Licensed Child Care Centers:	License-exempt Child Care Centers
Meet Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) standards for: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Physical space available per child• Environmental safety guidelines• Staff training• Staff to child ratios (the number of staff per child) by age:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6 weeks to 15 months - 4:1• 15 months to 2 years - 5:1• 2 to 3 years - 8:1• 3 to 4 years - 10:1• 5 years and up - 20:1	Care for children three-years-old and older, and are affiliated with: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Churches• Public Schools• Universities• Government Agencies

Licensed homes	Licensed group homes	License-exempt homes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Typically can care for up to eight children, including their own, or up to twelve children with an assistant.• Meet Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) standards for:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Physical space available per child◦ Environmental safety guidelines◦ Staff training◦ Staff to child ratios (the number of staff per child)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Typically may care for twelve or more children, including their own, or up to twelve children with the help of a full-time assistant.• Meet Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) standards for:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Physical space available per child◦ Environmental safety guidelines◦ Staff training◦ Staff to child ratios (the number of staff per child)	Also known as Family Friend & Neighbor care <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide care for no more than three children, including the caregivers children, unless the children all live in the same household.