

A Parent's Guide to Childcare

Dear Parent

A child care program can have a tremendous influence on your child. A good program may improve language skills, social skills, and build self-esteem. While no child care operation can replace a parent's love and attention, well-chosen child care can complement your efforts and enhance your child's development.

When you choose regulated child care you and your family join in new experiences and relationships. You, the child care director and/or primary caregivers have a responsibility to protect the health, safety and well-being of your child. The Texas Child Care Licensing Division, is part of this partnership, too.

Who is Child Care Licensing (CCL) and what do they do?

The Child Care Licensing Division (CCL) protects children in child care settings through regulation and education. With the assistance of child care providers and experts in areas such as child development, early childhood education, fire safety, health and sanitation, Child Care Licensing develops minimum standards.

CCL inspects licensed child care centers, such as before and after-school programs, school-age programs, and licensed and registered child care homes to make sure these operations meet the minimum standards for their child care program. All regulated child care operations must meet basic health and safety requirements.

CCL also investigates all reports of abuse or neglect and violations of the minimum standards and licensing laws. One example would be a report of an individual providing child care to an unrelated child without a permit. These operations are unregulated and considered illegal operations.

What should you know when searching for a child care program?

While each child care operation is responsible for meeting minimum standards, many child care operations exceed these requirements. Each operation has its own special personality and approach to educating and caring for children. Your child will benefit from the time you spend researching and choosing a child care operation that meets the needs of your child and your family. Child care is a choice. Make it an informed one by following these steps:

1. Research your options. If possible, begin gathering basic information several months before you think you will need child care. Many operations have waiting lists.
 - Check out our website - www.TxChildCareSearch.org *External Link* to find regulated child care operations. You can also view details about services

- offered by the child care operation, inspection dates, and any minimum standard violations.
- Check out our website - www.dfps.state.tx.us to view the minimum standards for the type of child care program you are interested in
 - Talk to friends, family, and other parents about their recommendations of regulated child care.
2. Narrow your list to a few child care centers or homes that interest you.
 - Arrange to visit the child care operations to compare their programs. If you did not review the inspection reports on our website, you will want to ask each operation about their history with Licensing.
 - Visit the operation when children are in care so you can see the type of activities the children are engaged in and you can see how the caregiver interacts with children. Keep in mind the individual needs of your child. Imagine what it would be like to spend 10 hours every day in that environment. You may want to ask if you could bring your child to the operation and spend a couple of hours so your child can explore the operation and interact with the caregiver.
 - Meet with the caregiver or Director. Discuss any of your concerns and make sure your questions are answered to your satisfaction. Use the [Top 10 Questions to Discuss when Choosing Child Care](#) when talking with the caregiver and Director. If you have any reservations about the caregiver or the operation, trust your instincts and keep looking. You may want to come back to the operation unannounced.
 3. Make a pros and cons list and choose the most appropriate child care program for your child and your family. If you have any specific questions about an operation's compliance with minimum standards before you make your choice feel free to contact your [local Licensing office](#).

What responsibilities do you have as a parent?

It is important that you establish a good relationship with your child care operation. Parent involvement and active communication can ensure a positive child care experience for both you and your child. Here are some other responsibilities you have as a parent:

- Provide the necessary information. The child care operation must obtain certain information from the parent about their child upon enrollment. It is important you provide this information so the child care operation can ensure the health and safety of your child. Some examples are:
 - Complete list of emergency contacts and persons your child may be released to.
 - Emergency care authorization and physician information.

- Current list of immunizations.
- Preschool health statement.
- Indication of any special needs or allergies.
- Medication authorizations.
- Read all the material the child care operation provides to you. A licensed or registered child care provider is required to provide you with a copy of their operational policies. It is important that you read, understand, and ask any questions.
- Keep talking with your child's caregiver. Good communication with your child and child's caregiver is vital from the very beginning and will help ensure good care for your child. Be mindful that a caregiver's main responsibility is the supervision and care of children. If having a discussion with your caregiver becomes a distraction, it may be a good idea to set up a conference time.
- Be your child's advocate. Ask your child about their day, what they did, who they saw or anything special that day. Share their excitement about new friends, new skills, listen to their concerns and give them a chance to boast about their achievements.

What should you do when you have concerns?

You may find yourself displeased about something that has happened at your child's child care operation. It is important you communicate your concerns with the director or caregiver. There may be a misunderstanding that can easily be resolved.

If you feel the situation isn't resolved and you believe the operation is not meeting the minimum standards, you should report your concerns to a local Licensing office or contact our Child Abuse Hotline at 1-800-252-5400. Licensing staff will investigate all reports of minimum standard violations.

If you suspect your child has been abused or neglected you must report the situation immediately to the Child Abuse Hotline. Parents who suspect that their child has been abused in child care sometimes remove their child from the operation, but do not report the problem. This leaves other children in danger. Be seriously concerned with your child care operation if you see that:

- Parents are not encouraged or allowed to visit the operation during the day.
- Children are left without direct adult supervision.
- Classrooms are continually out of control or there appears to be too many children in care.
- Caregivers are scolding and yelling at children.
- Caregivers are physically rough with children and allow rough play.

- The operation is unsanitary or has unsafe conditions.
- Your child is unhappy about being left at the facility and this doesn't improve over time.
- You child comes home with unexplained bruises or injuries.
- Infants are napping in unsafe sleep conditions.


More Information

- [Local Child Care Licensing Offices](#) (see info below)
- Child Care Information Line: 1-800-862-5252

Child Care Licensing Offices

Please note that the child care licensing offices listed below are open Monday through Friday during business hours.

Houston Area

Houston 
 P.O. Box 16017
 Houston, Texas 77222-6017
 (713) 940-3009

Contacts for 24-hour Child Care Operations

Call the office for your region with questions about 24-hour residential child care options. If you are not sure what region you're in, check our [Counties in DFPS Regions and Districts](#) page.

Contacts for 24-hour child care operations, by Region	
Region	Phone
Region 1 (Panhandle)	(806) 677-7676
Regions 2 and 9 (West Texas)	(325) 691-8254
Region 3 (North Texas)	(817) 543-3965
Regions 4, 5, and 6 (East Texas, Southeast Texas, and Houston)	(713) 696-7184

Contacts for 24-hour child care operations, by Region

Region	Phone
Region 7 (Central Texas North)	(512) 834-3233
Region 8 (Central Texas South)	(210) 304-3958
Region 10 (El Paso and Big Bend)	(915) 834-5731
Region 11 (South Texas)	(361) 878-3617

See Page below. Please print it, sign it, and return it with your enrollment packet.

Child's Name: _____

Parent's Acknowledgement

This is to acknowledge that **Graceview Early Learning Center** has provided me with "A Parent's Guide to Childcare" and has discussed its contents with me.

(Parent/Guardian Signature)

(Date)

1. Child-care facilities must provide parents with a copy of "A Parent's Guide to Childcare" and review its contents with them.
 2. Parents acknowledge receiving the Parent's Guide by signing and dating this form.
 3. This acknowledgement is kept in the child's record as long as the child remains at the facility.
- NOTE: Failure to provide parents with "A Parent's Guide to Childcare", review its contents, and obtain a signed acknowledgement, is a violation of standard 2300.A, Day Care Minimum Standards and Guidelines.