

# CHECKLIST FOR SAFE, QUALITY CHILD CARE: CENTERS



**Quality child care in the early years helps create a strong foundation for children's lifelong success!**

Families in Colorado have choices when it comes to child care. No matter what kind of care you decide on, use this checklist to make sure the program is safe and will provide quality care to support your child's early learning and development.

## Types of Child Care

### Family Child Care Home

A licensed Family Child Care Home can care for up to 6 children with no more than 2 children under 18 months. There are other types of Family Child Care Home licenses with different capacities. The license should be posted in the home.

### Child Care Center

A Child Care Center license is required when caring for 5 or more children. The care takes place in a dedicated building. The license should be posted to show families the ages and number of children the program is licensed for.

### License-Exempt Child Care

License-exempt child care includes care provided by a family member, friend or neighbor. Can care for up to 4 unrelated children with no more than 2 children under the age of 2. Can care for more than 4 children if children are siblings from the same family.



## NEED SUPPORT TO FIND CHILD CARE? WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

### STEP 1: LEARN ABOUT YOUR OPTIONS



Search for a licensed child care center in your community at [ColoradoShines.com](http://ColoradoShines.com). For each program, you'll find details about its licensing history, inspection reports, and if any complaints have been filed against the program.



Families can also call the Colorado Shines Child Care Resource and Referral Line to connect with a friendly navigator for one-on-one help to find child care. Call **1.877.338.2273** or [complete this online form](#).

## YOU MAY QUALIFY FOR FINANCIAL SUPPORT TO HELP PAY FOR CHILD CARE!

The Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) supports families with lower incomes to pay for quality child care.

[Learn more about income requirements and find out if you qualify for financial support through CCCAP.](#)

## STEP 2: VISIT, OBSERVE AND ASK QUESTIONS



The best way to learn about a program is to visit in person. You can talk to the teachers, observe how the provider and children interact, and see for yourself the learning environment that your child would spend time in.

When visiting child care centers, use this checklist as your guide.

### CHILD CARE CHECKLIST: CENTERS

Name of Program/Director: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Visit: \_\_\_\_\_

- Have you reviewed the program's licensing history on ColoradoShines.com?
- What are the hours? Are the hours flexible?
- What days is the program closed for holidays or teacher training?
- What is the age range of the children in the program?
- Does the program follow licensing rules for adult-to-child ratio and group size?
- What is the daily schedule of activities?
- What training has the director and teachers completed?
- Is there a list of current parents to contact for a reference on the program?
- Does the program have an emergency plan in case a child gets sick, injured or gets lost?
- What kind of regular communication does the program provide to families?
- How can families can participate in the program?
- Does the program have a parent handbook with policies to review?
- How does the program support children with special health care needs?

#### Safe Sleep for Infants

If you have a baby, make sure the program adheres to these practices proven to reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS).

- All infants are put to sleep on their backs.
- The sleep spaces have a firm surface, like a mattress in a crib, covered by a fitted sheet with no other bedding, bumpers, blankets or stuffed animals.
- Teachers are trained on safe sleep practices.
- Infants have their own crib or infant futon.
- Infants do not sleep in swings or car seats.
- Teachers can see/hear infants at all times, including during sleep.
- Teacher regularly checks on infants during sleep.



## Things to Look For...



### Health and Safety

- Review the program's licensing history on ColoradoShines.com.
- Supplies and equipment are clean and work well. Electrical outlets are covered.
- Emergency route and emergency numbers are posted.
- Doors are locked and visitors must sign in.
- The program space is clean and uncluttered.

### Daily Activities

- Nutritious meals and snacks are served.
- Nap and story time are part of every day and a daily schedule is posted.
- Puzzles, blocks, music, math, science, art and make-believe materials are available.
- Materials are culturally diverse.
- Children have time to choose their own activities.
- Adults encourage independence and help children learn new skills.
- A variety of activities includes outdoor playtime and indoor quiet time.

### Provider/Child Interactions

- Teachers speak to and treat the children warmly and respectfully.
- Teachers get down to the child's level when talking with them.
- Teachers listen closely to each child and are encouraging and positive when speaking with them.
- Children are asked questions and not just given directions.
- Teachers quickly respond to and care for children who are hurt or upset.
- Providers help children resolve conflict.
- Provider seems genuinely interested in what children are doing.

- All toys are clean and in good condition.
- Playground has safe surfaces, is fenced in, and has both sun and shade.
- Climbing equipment over 18 inches should have protective surfacing such as mulch, pea gravel, or AstroTurf.
- The playground is inspected regularly for safety.
- There is clear space around the equipment in case children fall.
- The program can accommodate my child if they need medication.

### Learning Environment

- Each child has a safe place to sleep, a place to store their things, and the space is warm and inviting.
- The children appear happy with adults and with other children.
- The furniture is child-sized and materials are at the children's level.
- Materials are appropriate for children's ages, and there are enough to go around.
- Different cultures, traditions, and students with special needs are seen in the classroom.