

Making the choice to place your child in the care of another is never easy and shouldn't be taken lightly. With all the choices available, it can sometimes feel like a daunting task leaving parents with more questions than answers. Our hope is to provide you with some tools to help you in this important process.

Every family situation is different. You may be considering any of the following options:

- Hiring a nanny
- Looking for a small, home caregiver
- Looking at a center-based program

Child development experts will agree, there is no "best" choice. Depending upon your family dynamics and preferences, each can have advantages and disadvantages. It's important to explore all available options to weigh the best fit for your family and child. Let's look into each of these possibilities more deeply to help you narrow down what might work for you.

## What to look for in a Nanny -

Hiring a Nanny is a good option if you:

- Are seeking a caregiver in your home
- Are able to afford a higher rate than center or home caregiver tuition
- Have a clearly defined philosophy of care you wish the nanny to follow while caring for your children
- Need someone who can transport your children when necessary and perhaps help with housework at your home.

Hiring a Nanny will require careful interviewing and reference checking. It is important to find someone who is both reliable and skilled. Good Nannies are good observers able to pay attention to your child without interfering in their play. They are even-tempered, able to tend to all your child's needs both physically and emotionally yet are also able to step back and allow your child to be his/herself without feeling the need to artificially stimulate or entertain.

When interviewing Nanny's consider weaving the following questions into your interview:

1. What duties were expected of her in previous homes?
2. What approach does she use in the following situations: Sleep/naptime, crying, feeding/mealtimes?
3. Ask her philosophy and approach when it comes to discipline and ask her to give examples. This opens the discussion of how you would like her to interact with your child.
4. If necessary, ask her to observe your child and how you interact with him/her.
5. Make sure she is currently certified in child/infant CPR and First Aid.

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6. If there are any books you have read that have greatly influenced your parenting philosophy, ask if she would be willing to read these as well to create an atmosphere of consistency.

Finding the right Nanny for your family may take time, but when you do, it is possible to develop a wonderful, long-lasting relationship. This child care solution gifts your children with the ability to remain in the comfort of their own home while you work.

### What to look for in a home caregiver -

When searching for a small, home caregiver there are a number of pieces to consider:

- Ratios & Licensing - how many children are receiving care, the ages being served, and is the home provider licensed with the state
- Home caregiver experience and education
- Home environment - is it clean, safe, and set up for child care?

#### *Ratios & Licensing*

In the State of New Hampshire, Family Child Care Homes that meet the following criteria must be registered and licensed with the state:

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*“as defined in RSA 170-E:2, IV(a), an occupied residence in which child day care is provided for less than 24 hours per day, except in emergencies, for up to 6 children from one or more unrelated families. The 6 children shall include any foster children residing in the home and all children related to the caregiver except children who are 10 years of age or older. In addition, to the 6 children, up to 3 children attending a full day school program may also be cared for up to 5 hours per day on school days and all day during school holidays.”*

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A Family Group Child Care Home is defined as the following and also requires a State License.

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*“as defined in RSA 170-E:2, IV (b), an occupied residence in which child day care is provided for less than 24 hours per day, except in emergencies, for 7 to 12 children from one or more unrelated families. The 12 children shall include all children related to the caregiver and any foster children residing in the home, except children who are 10 years of age or older. In addition to the 12 children, up to 5 children attending a full day school program may also be cared for up to 5 hours per day on school days and all day during school holidays.”*

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**Only home providers and early childhood educators caring for fewer than 6 children in their home can legally be unlicensed.**

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This law is in place to protect children from unsafe child/caregiver ratios and environments. To ensure young children's needs are able to be met, licensed programs must follow specific staff to child ratio requirements based on the average age of the group:

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*6 weeks to 12 months - 1:4 (one teacher to 4 children)*

*13 - 24 months - 1:5*

*25 - 35 months - 1:6*

*36 - 47 months - 1:8*

*48 - 59 months - 1:12*

*60 months and over - 1:15*

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### Home Caregiver Experience and Education-

Finding a home caregiver who has both education and experience in the field of early childhood education is an important aspect of interviewing home caregivers. There is a vast difference between someone who promotes a "day care" environment and an "early childhood education" program. Day care programs are often more akin to babysitting and most often the care provider has little formal training in early childhood education or an in depth understanding of child development. In as much, the quality of care and insight into your growing child and his/her needs will differ greatly between the two settings.

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*"Teachers' thoughts and beliefs that they've held through their entire lifetime enter the classroom with them. Therefore, a teacher who studies and cares deeply about human development will have a very different effect on the children than a teacher who does not think about such things." ~ Rudolf Steiner*

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Licensed home care programs require caregivers to hold a minimum of 9 credits in College or University level early childhood education before being able to care for children alone. Ideally, they want caregivers to have 18 credits to qualify as a Lead Teacher. In addition, they require all caregivers to complete 18 hours of professional development each year to continue to enhance their skills and develop themselves as teachers.

### Home Caregiving Environment -

There are a few important things to consider when touring home care programs.

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1. Is the environment where the children are cared for a “yes” environment, meaning, is it safe for children to play and explore without needing to be told “no” or redirected for safety reasons?
2. Is it clean? It is important to ask about cleanliness and disinfecting. Early childhood programs should be cleaned top to bottom every day to control the spread of infection. This includes toys, eating areas, floors, and bathrooms. Are dishes and cooking utensils sanitized? What cleaning products are being used?
3. Does the program have an illness policy? How do they manage children who become ill while in care? What measures do they take to prevent the spread of illness?
4. What happens if the home care provider becomes ill? Does she/he have a qualified substitute who can care for your child?
5. What does the outdoor play environment look like? Is it fenced in? What type of play materials do children use outside? How much time during the day are children exposed to nature? What happens during inclement weather?
6. Are there pets in the home? Do the pets interact with children?
7. Is the space cluttered? Is the décor or color scheme overstimulating?
8. Where do the children nap? How is naptime managed?
9. If the provider is not licensed, does he/she hold a current adult/child/infant AED CPR/First Aid certification? All licensed family and center based care providers are required to be current on these certifications at all times (in centers, 1 certified teacher per 20 children).

Through this process, you will be able to formulate a picture of how you would like your children to spend their day. If you’ve been reading recent research, you will have learned the importance of ample time for play and plenty of time outdoors in all weather. Visiting and interviewing your home care provider will help you identify if their caregiving philosophy resonates with your wishes for your child. Licensed Home Care Providers must follow strict health and safety guidelines when it comes to the caregiving environment.

### What to look for in a Child Care Center -

Many of the elements you looked at in a family care home will also apply to a child care center. All centers must be licensed and will follow strict regulations when it comes to child/teacher ratios, qualifications of teachers, and health and safety regulations, as highlighted in the above section. When looking at centers for care, parents should also focus on:

- Size of classrooms - how many children are cared for in each class? Large classrooms can be overwhelming and overstimulating for some children
- Philosophy of care - ensure the center’s philosophy matches yours
- Location and hours of operation

Child development expert, Magda Gerber advises parents to ask themselves the following questions while looking at centers as a solution for care:

1. Would my child like to be here? If yes, why? If no, why not?
2. Is it too dark or too light? Too big or too small?

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3. Will he/she constantly have different people providing care or will a couple special people be given the time to get to know my child and provide consistent care?
4. Is she/he allowed to move freely and do what she/he can do? Are children placed in restrictive devices such as bouncy seats or strapped into high-chairs?
5. If my child is tired, is she/he allowed to sleep?
6. Can my child move around at will or will she/he be carried?
7. If my child moves around indoors and out, is it safe?
8. If my child is a young baby, are there older babies or toddlers around who may step on his head? Is there a safe place designated for non-mobile babies to have floor time?
9. Does the environment help him/her to be able to develop skills naturally?
10. Are the toys simple or complicated?

### The importance of play for infants & toddlers - excerpt from:

#### Your Self-Confident Baby

by Magda Gerber, Founder & Director of Resources for Infant Educators

*“Another thing to consider is whether the children are pushed to learn or free to play. Many centers have an agenda to teach children, to be cognitively stimulating. If you think of the wide range of things children have to figure out on a daily basis, it’s apparent that their learning is ongoing. A child learns from everything around him. It’s more important for a young child to be accepted and loved for who he is rather than expected to do things he cannot do.*

*There is no good reason for an infant or toddler to be placed in an environment where he is intellectually “stimulated” by being asked to memorize flash cards, taught how to work a puzzle, or given the task of building a tower out of blocks. Rather, he needs a sensitive, human environment - a few familiar people who are responsive to him when he expresses a need. The play environment should be set up based on what the child is ready for and interested in doing. The environment should be safe and geared to his developmental level so he can play freely using simple objects, without constantly hearing the word “no.”*

*In Young Children, by child development expert David A. Caruso, he explains, “caregivers should plan many opportunities for each child to generate responses to his or her own exploratory play rather than simply be stimulated by others.” This, combined with an attentive carer who provides this optimal environment for the child, promotes his security, trust, and all-around development.*

*Ask yourself whether what the carers demand of your child is appropriate. Can your child deliver? At this age (birth - kindergarten), it’s more important for a child to learn how to interact with his family and his peers, and to figure out his world, a process that never ends. The goal for your child at this age should be to feel good about him/herself.*

*Look for a situation that has a dependable, yet flexible, schedule for the children rather than a set curriculum. Meals and naptimes should occur at the same times and in the same place each day, promoting predictability. Children depend on this reliable schedule for security, especially when away from home. However, carers need to be flexible with, and adaptable to, a child’s individual moods and needs.*

*Stimulating children’s minds through planned activities or academic programing doesn’t promote security. A predictable routine does. If, for example, you are an adult who drinks*

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coffee in the morning, you wake up and want your coffee. It's the same way with children. There is a spark you see in their eyes when at the expected time you say, "Now we are going outside," or "Now it's lunchtime." They know what to expect and look forward to it."

### *The importance of play for preschool and pre-kindergarten -*

A recent article in the Washington Post from pediatric occupational therapist Angela Hanscom, founder of TimberNook, a nature-based development program designed to foster creativity and independent play outdoors in New England, highlights current research connecting lack of play to an increase in sensory issues in young children.

*"Like many other American parents, I had an obsession: academic success for my child. Only, I was going about it completely wrong. Yes, my daughter would later go on to test above average with her academic skills, but she was missing important life skills. Skills that should have been in place and nurtured during the preschool years. My wake-up call was when the preschool teacher came up to me and said, "Your daughter is doing well academically. In fact, I'd say she exceeds expectations in these areas. But she is having trouble with basic social skills like sharing and taking turns." Not only that, but my daughter was also having trouble controlling her emotions, developed anxiety and sensory issues, and had trouble simply playing by herself!*

*Little did I know at the time, but my daughter was far from being the only one struggling with social and sensory issues at such a young age. This was becoming a growing epidemic. A few years ago, I interviewed a highly respected director of a progressive preschool. She had been teaching preschoolers for about 40 years and had seen major changes in the social and physical development of children in the past few generations.*

*"Kids are just different," she started to say. When I asked her to clarify, she said, "They are more easily frustrated - often crying at the drop of a hat." She had also observed that children were frequently falling out of their seats "at least three times a day," less attentive, and running into each other and even the walls. "It is so strange. You never saw these issues in the past."*

*She went on to complain that even though her school was considered highly progressive, they were still feeling the pressure to limit free play more than she would like in order to meet the growing demands for academic readiness that was expected before children entered kindergarten.*

*Research continues to point out that young children learn best through meaningful play experiences, yet many preschools are transitioning from play-based learning to becoming more academic in nature. A preschool teacher recently wrote to me: "I have preschoolers and even I feel pressure to push them at this young age. On top of that, teachers have so much pressure to document and justify what they do and why they do it, the relaxed playful environment is compromised. We continue to do the best we can for the kid's sake, while trying to fit into the ever-growing restraints we must work within."*

*As parents and teachers strive to provide increasingly organized learning experiences for children (as I had once done), the opportunities for free play - especially outdoors is becoming less of a priority. Ironically, it is through active free play outdoors where children start to build many of the foundational life skills they need in order to be successful for years to come.*

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*In fact, it is before the age of 7 years – ages traditionally known as “pre-academic” – when children desperately need to have a multitude of whole-body sensory experiences on a daily basis in order to develop strong bodies and minds. This is best done outside where the senses are fully ignited and young bodies are challenged by the uneven and unpredictable, ever-changing terrain.*

*Preschool years are not only optimal for children to learn through play, but also a critical developmental period. If children are not given enough natural movement and play experiences, they start their academic careers with a disadvantage. They are more likely to be clumsy, have difficulty paying attention, trouble controlling their emotions, utilize poor problem-solving methods, and demonstrate difficulties with social interactions. We are consistently seeing sensory, motor, and cognitive issues pop up more and more in later childhood, partly because of inadequate opportunities to move and play at an early age.*

*What is our natural instinct as adults when issues arise? To try and fix the problem that could have been prevented in the first place. When children reach elementary school, we practice special breathing techniques, coping skills, run social skill groups, and utilize special exercises in an attempt to “teach” children how to be still and to improve focus.*

*However, these skills shouldn't have to be taught, but something that was developed at a young age in the most natural sense – through meaningful play experiences.*

*If children were given ample opportunities to play outdoors every day with peers, there would be no need for specialized exercises or meditation techniques for the youngest of our society. They would simply develop these skills through play. That's it. Something that doesn't need to cost a lot of money or require much thought. Children just need the time, the space, and the permission to be kids.*

*Let the adult-directed learning experiences come later. Preschool children need to play!”*

### *Making the final decision -*

We hope this e-book provided you with insight that will help you make an informed decision when selecting a child care provider. Remember, what is most important is the confidence you have in your selected caregiver to meet all your child's needs in a kind, respectful manner that is in alignment with your personal philosophy. Children deserve to be cared for with warmth, love, and understanding. This is our wish for your child!

  
**A CHILD'S NATURE**  
*care and education*

## Further Reading for Parents -

Below is a list of books we recommend for parents interested in learning more about child development and care of young children.

Gerber, M., & Johnson, A. (1998). *Your self-confident baby: How to encourage your child's natural abilities--from the very start*. New York: J. Wiley.

Gerber, M., & Weaver, J. (2002). *Dear parent: Caring for infants with respect*. Los Angeles, CA: Resources for Infant Educators (RIE).

Lansbury, Janet (2014). *No bad kids: Toddler discipline without shame*.

Lansbury, Janet. *Elevating child care: A guide to respectful parenting*.

Patterson, B. J., & Bradley, P. (2000). *Beyond the rainbow bridge: Nurturing our children from birth to seven*. Amesbury, MA: Michaelmas Press.

Dancy, R. B. (2012). *You are your child's first teacher: Encouraging your child's natural development from birth to age six*. New York: Ten Speed Press.

## Online Resources for Parents -

<http://www.janetlansbury.com/>

Janet has been a presenter at early childhood conferences, written infant/toddler parenting articles, and served on the board of directors of Resources for Infant Educators (RIE). She understands raising a child is one of the most important and challenging jobs we will ever have. It brings a considerable amount of joy. It can also be confusing, discouraging and haphazard. Her goal is to provide clarity, inspiration (and maybe a smile or two) by sharing insights she's gained through her parenting classes, experiences as a mother, and studies with her friend and mentor Magda Gerber.

<http://www.simplicityparenting.com/>

### About Simplicity Parenting

Imagine your life... with a sense of ease as you begin to limit distractions and say no to too much, too fast, too soon. Today's busier, faster, supersized society is waging an undeclared war . . . on childhood. As the pace of life accelerates to hyper speed - with too much stuff, too many choices, and too little time - children feel the pressure. They can become anxious, have trouble with friends and school, or even be diagnosed with behavioral problems. Now, in defense of the extraordinary power of less, internationally renowned family counselor Kim John Payne and the team at Simplicity Parenting help you reclaim for your children - for your whole family - the space and freedom we all need. This simplifying path allows kids individuality to shine and their attention flourish. It builds a safe, warm and secure family base camp from which a child can launch out into the world with resiliency. The Simplicity Parenting approach is based on over thirty years' experience successfully

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supporting busy families. It helps you in making small doable changes, worry less - and enjoy more. For those who want to balance their children's lives down but don't know where to start, Simplicity Parenting offers both inspiration and a blueprint for change.

<http://blog.bellalunatoys.com/>

Sarah Baldwin is a Waldorf early childhood educator, author, and now the owner of Bella Luna Toys, an online shop selling **Waldorf toys** designed to nourish the senses and inspire the imagination. She is also the author of the book Nourishing Children and Families, a guide for teachers and leaders of Waldorf parent/child playgroups.

When she made the decision to become the new owner of Bella Luna Toys in September 2009, she didn't just want it to be a retail website. She envisioned it as a forum where she could share her knowledge of children and what they need, and her love for Waldorf education. She wanted it to be a site where she could answer families' questions and interact with them. And, most importantly, she wanted it to be a place where I could promote the magic of childhood and importance of play - helping children and families find joy in life and learning.

Her blog, *Moon Child*, is a wonderful resource.