



Choosing Child Care Checklist

Quality Rated is an initiative of Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.



What is important to you and your family when choosing child care: Cost? Hours? Quality of care? Size of the program? This checklist identifies important aspects about a program to consider and questions to ask when visiting a potential child care program. Identify the questions on the checklist that are most important to you, and ask them during your visit to a program.

Child Care Programs to Consider

Why choose a licensed child care program?

Licensed child care facilities follow state licensing rules to ensure children are in a safe and healthy environment. Licensed child care programs in Georgia:

- Receive a minimum of two unannounced inspections from the state of Georgia to ensure the program is following health and safety guidelines.
- Are required to comply with state health and safety guidelines for child care.
- Have child care program staff who are trained in CPR and First Aid, and have someone on premises with this training whenever children are present.
- All child care program employees in a licensed facility must have a satisfactory criminal background check.
- Routine cleaning and sanitation of indoor and outdoor play areas and equipment.
- Prohibit smoking on premises during hours of operation.
- Teachers and directors must have a minimum of 10 hours of professional child care and child development training a year.

Before you visit a facility, know that there are two types of licensed child care programs in Georgia:

Family Child Care Learning Home

A Family Child Care Learning Home is operated in a private residential home and provides child care for children less than 18 years of age for less than 24 hours per day. Family Child Care Learning Homes care for three, but no more than six children for a fee.

Child Care Learning Centers

A program operated by an individual or business that provides group care for pay. These have seven or more children under 18 years of age, for less than 24 hours.

Why choose a Quality Rated child care program?

Parents and families need an independent, trustworthy resource to help them find high-quality child care, preschool and pre-K programs. Georgia's Quality Rated tool helps families find child care programs in their area that have been evaluated by credentialed early childhood experts and identified as high-quality. With the tool, parents and families can make sure that the program they are considering has been thoroughly reviewed by the State of Georgia and the program they choose is committed to providing their children an environment and experience that is best for their development. It's free at [QualityRated.org](https://www.qualityrated.org).

Will my child be safe, healthy, and thrive?

- Is the child care program licensed by the State of Georgia?
- Is the child care program Quality Rated?
 - If they are not, are they in the process of becoming Quality Rated?
- What safety measures does the program have to ensure child well-being?
- What are the teacher-student ratios?
- Are there enough staff members to give attention to all the children?
- What education and experience do the teachers have that will be working with your child?
- Is there a program administrator available and on site every day during normal business hours?
- Is the facility child-proofed inside and outside (cleaning supplies and medications inaccessible, electrical outlets covered)?
- What are the policies for when a child becomes ill?
- How often and where are diapers changed?
- Is there an emergency plan for contacting families? Will the same staff take care of my child regularly?
- Will my child be with the same group of children regularly?
- Is the setting happy, comfortable and organized? Does the program have liability insurance?

What will my child do during the day?

- Does the child care program have lesson plans for each group or for each classroom?
 - If so, are these lesson plans followed?
- Does the child care program use a curriculum aligned to the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS)?
- Do children have time to play on their own and can they get to plenty of toys and activities?
- Is rest time based on the needs of each child (infants sleep on their own schedule, quiet activities for children who don't nap)?

How are parents included?

- Does the program encourage parent volunteers?
- How will I hear about my child's day?
- Do I feel respected as my child's first and most important teacher?

What will my child eat and when?

- Does the program participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), meaning my child will receive free nutritious meals and snacks?
- Are children offered healthy meals and snacks?
- What are the rules about food brought from home?
- Are children's choices, appetites, allergies, and religious or cultural restrictions respected?

Do I agree with the discipline policy?

- Do staff set limits that are reasonable, clear, consistent, and age-appropriate?
- Do staff use calm voices and help children understand appropriate behavior if there is a problem?
- What happens when children hit, bite, or bully?

How are staff supported?

- Do staff receive training and continuing education?
- Do staff have break times?
- Do staff receive time to plan activities?

Cost of Care

- How much does it cost for my child to attend the program based on their age? How much is before/after school care?
- Does the child care program provide transportation? Does the child care program offer any discounts (siblings, slide scale fees)?
- If I am eligible, does the program accept Childcare and Parent Services (CAPS)?
 - What is the policy on overage cost of care that the CAPS program does not cover?