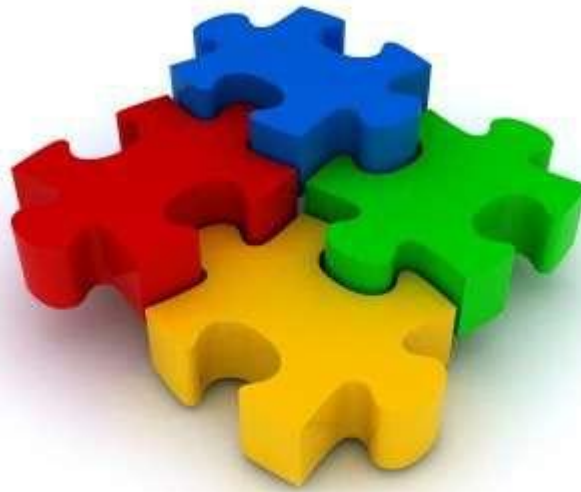


# A Guide to Quality Child Care in St. Lawrence County

*Helping families put the pieces together ...*



**“Quality Child Care ... Good Beginnings Never End”**

The mission of the St. Lawrence Child Care Council, Inc. is to coordinate, assist, strengthen and expand child care services in St. Lawrence County with an emphasis on education and networking to promote quality child care environments for all children of income, race, ethnic heritage or family configuration.

**St. Lawrence Child Care Council**  
**A New York State Resource and Referral Agency**

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# ***Welcome!***

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Thank you for contacting the St. Lawrence Child Care Council, your local Child Care Resource Center (CCRC). Locating and choosing child care is one of the most difficult decisions any family will make. One of the goals of the Child Care Council is to assist families in their search for quality child care by providing information that may assist them with their child care decisions. Choosing the care setting that best meets the needs of a child is the sole choice of the parent; therefore the Council will not make any recommendations or choose a child care setting for any family. The Council will, however:

- Help identify child care options within your community
- Refer families to those programs that are licensed/registered to provide child care by the New York State Office of Children & Family Services
- Provide families with information they can use to guide them through the interview/selection process
- Provide families with information regarding quality indicators in early learning programs
- Ensure regular trainings are available for Providers to keep them up to date on current child development research, trends and best practices in early care & education.
- Answer any questions families may have regarding child care regulations
- Provide information regarding the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) that families may be eligible for to assist in the cost of child care

Protecting children is everyone's job. If you have a concern about a child care program you should immediately report that program to the New York State Office of Children & Family Services at (800) 732 – 5207. **To report incidences of child abuse & neglect call 1-800-342-3720.**

The St. Lawrence Child Care Council is committed to providing high quality services for families. As a result, the following standards of customer services are as follows:

**Confidentiality:** Information received from families about their child care needs becomes a part of the CCRC database and is used for referral services, research and grant purposes. All personal or identifying information remains confidential.

**Commitment to Diversity:** All families are served without discrimination or prejudice. The Council recognizes and remains sensitive to the various ethnic, cultural, linguistic, special needs, religious and lifestyle groups in our communities.

**Fee Statement:** Child care resource and referral services are free of charge.

**Feedback Regarding Services:** It is our pleasure to serve you and your family. If you have any questions, concerns or would like to give feedback please contact the Council office. This feedback is important for ensuring the delivery of the best services possible.

**New York State Standards of Excellence (SOE) Certification:** Is our state-specific set of best practice standards for the CCRCs. The NY SOE covers best practice standards in the following categories: Agency Governance; Program Management; Consumer/Parent Services; Provider Services; Community Engagement. The SOE Certification is valid for 3 years before needing renewal.

# **PART I:**

## **Overview of Child Care Regulations**



## ***Types of Regulated Early Learning Programs***

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“Providing child care for more than two children for more than three hours per day may require licensing or registration with the New York State Office of Children & Family Services”

**Accredited Care:** Accredited programs ensure the quality of children’s daily experiences in early childhood programs and promote positive child outcomes.

- **Accredited Child Care Centers:** The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation is a mark of quality. NAEYC Accreditation is a voluntary system by which programs measure themselves against a national set of standards. Accreditation programs are high quality programs that follow established criteria which contribute to children’s optimal development and learning.
- **Accredited Family Child Care Homes:** The National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC) is the national accreditation system for family child care providers. Accredited homes follow the highest quality and standards for family child care programs across the country.

**Registered/Licensed Care:** An early care program that has obtained registration/licensing from the New York State Office of Children & Family Services means:

- Everyone in the home over 18 has cleared a comprehensive background check
- The Licensed/Registered Provider has completed mandatory health and safety training
- Program agrees to comply with state health and safety regulations
- Everyone providing care has a minimum of two years experience
- Home has passed a regional fire and safety inspection
- Regulation compliance is monitored by announced and unannounced quarterly visits
- Providers have a minimum of 15 hours of pre-service Health & Safety and 30 hours of additional training every two years
- Specific child to caregiver ratios and group sizes are followed (see chart on next page)

**Legally Exempt Care:** An early care program that is legally exempt means:

- Everyone in the home over 18 has cleared a comprehensive background check
- Care is provided either in the child’s home or the provider’s home
- Care is provided for a maximum of two children not directly related to the provider or a maximum of 8 children who are directly related to the provider
- The provider must re-enroll annually to maintain eligibility
- The provider self-certifies they meet required health and safety guidelines
- Regulation compliance is monitored by announced and unannounced site visits/inspections
- Providers have a minimum of 5 hours of pre-service Health & Safety and 5 hours of additional training every enrollment period

## ***Care Options***

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### **Child Care Center:** (children 6 wks through 12 years)

In a Child Care Center care is usually provided in a setting similar to a school where there may be many classrooms and children are grouped by age. Child Care Centers employ several full and/or part time teaching staff whose qualifications are regulated by the New York State Office of Children & Family Services. State Licensing is required.

Some advantages to center-based care:

- Staff are trained and supervised
- There are more resources and equipment available
- Care is available even when staff member(s) are absent
- Usually offers a child development curriculum

Some disadvantages to center-based care:

- High incidences of staff turnover
- Large groups of children may mean less individual attention
- Some children may not adapt well to large group settings
- Usually does not have flexible hours



### **Group Family Child Care:** (children 6 wks through 12 years)

Group Family Child Care is provided in the provider's home for 8 to 16 children. In the Group Family setting there is a provider and assistant available to care for the children. The New York State Office of Children & Family Services establishes the qualifications for Group Family providers. State Licensing is required.

Some advantages to Group Family care:

- Flexible hours may be available
- Smaller group of children
- Home-like environment
- Trained staff who may offer a child development curriculum

Some disadvantages to Group Family care:

- Other child care plans need to be made when provider is sick or on vacation
- Limited supplies, equipment and resources

### **Family Child Care:** (children 6 wks through 12 years)

Family Child Care is provided in the provider's home for 2 to 8 children. In the Family setting there is a single provider to care for the children. The New York State Office of Children & Family Services establishes the qualifications for Family Child Care providers. Registration by the State is required.

Some advantages to Family care:

- Flexible hours may be available
- Smaller group of children
- Home-like environment
- Trained staff who may offer a child development curriculum

Some disadvantages to Family care:

- Other child care plans need to be made when provider is sick or on vacation
- Limited supplies, equipment and resources
- A single adult is alone with a group of children

**Legally Exempt:** (children 6 wks through 12 years)

Legally Exempt care can be provided in either the child's home or the provider's home. Care is usually provided by a single provider who may or may not be related to the child(ren). If a child is **not directly related** to the provider a **maximum of 2 children** may be cared for. If the children **are directly related** to the provider a **maximum of 8 children** may be cared for. State registration or licensing is not required.

Some advantages to Legally Exempt Care:

- Convenient and may offer flexible hours
- Home-like settle; if child's home then familiar surroundings
- Develop a close bond with the provider
- Ability to choose a specific provider
- Usually care is available even when child is ill
- Typically less expensive



Some disadvantages to Legally Exempt Care:

- Child development resources may not be available or adequate
- Fewer opportunities for children to socialize
- Parent is responsible for ongoing monitoring of health and safety concerns in the environment

**School-Age Child Care:** (kindergarten through 12 years)

School-Aged Child Care is offered in a variety of settings and is intended to provide care for school-aged children before and after school, on holidays and during summer vacation. State Registration is required if operated by a community entity, but may or may not be required if operated by a school district.

Some advantages to School-Aged Child Care:

- May be located in the child's school
- May offer assistance with child's homework
- Provides healthy after-school snacks

Some disadvantages to School-Aged Child Care:

- Children are usually of different ages and have different interests that may not always be met
- Inconvenient if not located in same program with younger children



## ***Program Capacity Guideline and Staff/Child Ratio***

.....

### **Program Capacity Guidelines**

#### **Family Child Care:**

Age Range: 6 weeks to 12 years

Maximum Number: 6 plus two school-aged (for a single provider)

**There MUST be 1 provider for every 2 children under 2 years of age!!**

#### **Group Family Child Care:**

Age Range: 6 weeks to 12 years

Maximum Number: 12 plus 4 school-aged

Maximum Number: for a single provider is 6 plus 2 school-aged

**There MUST be 1 provider for every 2 children under 2 years of age!!**



### **Child Care Center Staff/Child Ratio and Group Size**

| Age of Children        | Staff/Child Ratio<br>NYS Regulation<br>(*) | NAEYC<br>Best<br>Practice | Group Size<br>NYS<br>Regulation(**) | NAEYC<br>Best<br>Practice |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Under six weeks        | (***)                                      |                           | (***)                               |                           |
| 6 wks to 18 months     | 1:4                                        | 1:3                       | 8                                   |                           |
| 18 months to 36 months | 1:5                                        | 1:6                       | 12                                  | 12                        |
| 3 years                | 1:7                                        | 1:8                       | 18                                  | 16                        |
| 4 years                | 1:8                                        | 1:10                      | 21                                  | 20                        |
| 5 years                | 1:9                                        | 1:12                      | 24                                  | 25                        |
| 6 years to 9 years     | 1:10                                       |                           | 20                                  |                           |
| 10 years to 12 years   | 1:15                                       |                           | 30                                  |                           |

(\*) Staff/Child ratio refers to the maximum number of children per staff person

(\*\*) Group size refers to the maximum number of children cared for together as a unit

(\*\*\*) Program may apply for a regulations waiver although it is not guaranteed.

Best Practice in early care settings recommends fewer children per staff member and smaller group sizes in order to ensure optimal care. NYS Regulations have considered this in establishing program ratios and group sizes.

**Note:** Always ask to see the programs license or registration for exact capacity allowances

## ***Provider Qualifications & Training***

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### **Basic Qualifications:**

All child care providers who work in a Child Care Center, Group Family Child Care, Family Child Care and/or School-Aged Child Care are required to have the following:

- A Criminal History Review
- Child Abuse and Maltreatment State Central Registry Review
- Physical, including a TB test
- A Minimum of 2 years experience
- References

The minimum age of a staff person in a Child Care Center or School-Aged Child Care Program is **16 years**. However, no person under **18 years** of age may be left alone to supervise a group of children.

Family Child Care Providers, Group Family Child Care Providers and their assistants, alternates and substitutes must be **18 years** of age.



### **Training Requirements:**

All child care providers who work in a Child Care Center, Group Family Child Care, Family Child Care and/or School-Aged Child Care are required to obtain 30 hours of training every two years. Training must cover the following topic areas:

1. Principles of child development, including appropriate supervision of children, meeting the needs of children with physical or emotional challenges and behavior management and discipline.
  2. Nutrition and health needs of children
  3. Child care program development
  4. Safety and security procedures, including communication between parents & staff
  5. Business record maintenance and management
  6. Child Abuse and maltreatment identification and prevention
  7. Statutes and regulations pertaining to the child care
  8. Statutes and regulations pertaining to child abuse and maltreatment
  9. Education and prevention of shaken baby syndrome
  10. CPR/first aid (Effective December 2010)
- Legally exempt child care providers are required to have 5 hours of pre-service Health & Safety training.

### **Accreditation & Credentials:**

Those who work in early care settings in New York State may also choose to obtain or participate in specific accreditation or certifications such as NAEYC or NAFCC Accreditation and the Child Development Associate credential. They may also obtain New York State credentials in Infant/Toddler Care, Family Child Care, School Age Child Care, Children's Program Administrator, Family Development and NYS Early Learning Trainer or QualitystarsNY.



## ***The Cost of Child Care & Assistance***

There are a variety of factors that affect the cost of child care. For infants and toddlers, quality care is particularly expensive because group sizes must be small. Some other reasons why child care can be so expensive may include:

- High ratio of adults to children, especially when caring for infants and toddlers.
- Qualifications of the providers or teachers. Maintaining professional development credentialing, first aid/CPR certification, etc. can be expensive for providers.
- Appropriate equipment and operating costs. It is important for a quality child care program to offer a rotation of educational toys, books, child sized furniture and other educational materials. Cleaning supplies for sanitation purposes, spare diapers, first aid supplies, etc. are also important for a child care program to keep in stock.
- Nutritious food for healthy snacks and meals.
- Cost of space- such as rent.
- Insurance costs.
- Type of program offered.

Child care charges vary among providers and across service areas. We have included the most recent average cost of care **Market Rate Survey** in your additional materials. These rates are established by the NYS Office of Children & Family Services through surveys conducted of local area providers.

### **Child Care Assistance**

In St. Lawrence County the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) is available to assist eligible families with the cost of child care depending upon the availability of program funding.

Eligibility Requirements include:

- A child less than 13 years
- An adolescent under 19 years old, who is physically or mentally incapable of caring for themselves or is under court supervision.
- Family income is less than 300% of the state income standard
- The parent is working, attending job training or an approved educational program. This includes BOCES and vocational schools.
- For more information on the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) contact the St. Lawrence County Department of Social Services Day Care Unit at (315) 379-2285.

### **Priority Populations**

#### **Federally mandated priority populations**

- Families who are experiencing homelessness.
- Families with very low incomes; less than 200% of the State standard.
- Families with children with special needs.

## State mandated priority populations

- Children of custodial parents who are less than 21 years of age and completing requirements for a high school diploma or GED, working, or attending a job training or approved educational program as stated in the eligibility guidelines.

## Additional eligible populations

- Homeless parents looking for permanent housing
- Parents enrolled in substance abuse treatment programs who need child care in order to participate
- Job seekers
- Parents who are ill/incapacitated

## Fees

Families eligible for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) must contribute toward payment of such services by paying a fee based upon family size and gross annual income. A sliding fee scale is applied. One fee per family is charged for all child care services provided by the social services district. Families receiving CCAP will be assessed a minimum family share of \$1.00 per week, but that share may be more based upon CCAP regulations and household income. **This is a reimbursement program therefore, families may be required to pay for child care services.**

## Eligible Providers

Eligible providers under the Child Care Assistance Program include all regulated providers.

- Licensed Child Care Centers
- Licensed or registered School-Aged Child Care Programs
- Licensed Group Family Child Care Providers
- Licensed Small Child Care Centers serving 3 – 6 children
- Registered Family Child Care Providers
- Enrolled Legally Exempt Child Care Providers

## Parental Choice

Parents eligible for the Child Care Assistance Program are allowed to select any eligible child care provider. All parents will be given information about types of child care available, child care regulatory standards and how to choose a child care provider.

## Other Financial Assistance Options

- If you are not eligible for the Child Care Assistance Program you may be eligible for the Workforce Development Institute Child Care Scholarship Program. For more information call (518) 272-3500.
- In addition to or in lieu of qualifying for the Child Care Assistance Program parents may wish to consider enrolling their child(ren) in a Head Start or Pre-Kindergarten program.
- Parents may also ask about discounts such as sliding scale fees based upon household income or discounts for enrolling more than one child in the same program.
- Some employers may offer scholarships, incentives or flexible benefit or dependent care programs to help cover child care costs. Always ask about these options during your interview with the provider.

## **New York State Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit (EITC)**

The Earned Income Tax Credit is a special refundable tax credit offered by the federal government. New York State also has a refundable EITC. The Federal and State EITCs are for working people who earn low or moderate incomes. Workers who qualify for EITC can get back some or all of the income tax that was taken out of their pay during the year. Even if you don't own taxes, you may be eligible for a refund check simply by claiming the EITC.

To be eligible, you must have worked full or part time at some point in the year. For the most current information and to determine eligibility contact the NY State Department of Taxation and Finance General Tax Information at 1 -800-225-5829 or go to the website at

[www.tax.state.ny.us](http://www.tax.state.ny.us).

## **Child & Dependent Care Credit**

If you need to pay for child care in order to work or look for work, this benefit can help offset expenses. The Federal Child & Dependent Care Credit is a nonrefundable credit for working people. The credit is limited to the amount of the worker's income tax. However, the New York State Child & Dependent Care Credit is refundable.

- You are eligible for the credit if:
- You paid for child care for a child under 13 who lives with you and you claim as a dependent;
- You paid for child care in order to work or look for work
- If married, both spouses must have needed care to work or look for work or one spouse must have been a full-time student or disabled.

The amount of expenses you claim on your federal return may not exceed the family's earned income. The federal Child & Dependent Care Tax Credit provides tax assistance depending on family income and the number of eligible dependents. The New York State Child & Dependent Care Tax Credit also provides tax assistance.

For the most current information and to determine eligibility contact the NY State Department of Taxation and Finance General Tax Information at 1 -800-225-5829 or go to the website at [www.tax.state.ny.us](http://www.tax.state.ny.us).



**For more information about child care assistance contact:**

The St. Lawrence County Department of Social Services Day Care Unit at **(315)-379-2285**

PART II:

How to Choose Child Care  
That Meets the Needs of  
Your Family



## ***Changing Needs Through the Ages***

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No matter their age, children need positive interactions with their peers and caregivers, a safe healthy place to play and an environment that supports development through the use of age appropriate materials and activities. Listed below are general guidelines to consider based on the age(s) of your child:

**Infants (Birth to 2 years):** Infants need to be picked up, cuddled and talked to. They need to be held when they are fed and talked to when being changed. Their feeding and naps should be based on their **individual** schedule. Infants need enough room to crawl around in and play with push-pull toys (tummy-time). There should be places intended for an infant to pull them selves up at and soft places to climb. Infants like to play with (and mouth) soft, colorful, squeaky and interactive toys and there should be a variety of textures, colors, sounds and smells for them to explore. There should be board books available for infants to see, hear, touch and even chew.



**Toddlers (2 years – 3 years):** Toddlers need to move. There should be big toys to push, pull, ride on and climb. Daily activities that include running, jumping, sliding and dancing are also important for their development. They like to play “pretend” and should have toys that allow them to use their imagination and act out social scenarios. Materials such as play dough, finger paints, crayons, big sheets of paper and other art supplies will also support their creativity. Toddlers should have books to read and play with, time for stories, songs and lots of talking and sharing with other children and their caregiver. Toddlers also need structure, consistency and opportunities to act independently.

**Preschoolers (3 years to 5 years):** Preschoolers are curious and want to know the how and why of things. They like to take things apart, build things and make them move. Materials such as blocks, cars, puzzles, objects to string, etc... should be available. They love to use their imagination and their developing problem solving skills. When playing make-believe they prefer to use everyday materials. Preschoolers love to run, jump, dance and be silly. There should be plenty of books for reading and being read to and writing/drawing materials to encourage their own story telling.

**School-aged Children (Kindergarden – 12 years):** Since school-aged children have a structured schedule in school all day, they should have a variety of activities to choose from after school. It is important to **not duplicate** school activities and that the children have the opportunity to **play**. There should be areas and equipment available for active play, as well as quiet areas for reading, doing homework and just being alone. Putting on plays, doing art projects and cooking are great activities for school-aged children.



## ***Matching Your Child's Style***

When choosing a program for your child it is important to keep in mind *their personality* and the *type of activities* they enjoy participating in. The following are guidelines to help select the type of care that might best meet the needs of your child.



### ***Your child's personality style ...***

|                                                                                                                                                                                    |                   |                                                                                                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Adaptable</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flexible</li> <li>• Approaches new people/situations with ease</li> <li>• Good with transitions</li> </ul>               | <b>Look for →</b> | Large group settings providing social interactions and new experiences                                                                   |
| <b>Cautious</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thoughtful</li> <li>• Approaches new people/situations cautiously</li> <li>• Has difficulties with transitions</li> </ul> | <b>Look for →</b> | Small group settings that are less overwhelming                                                                                          |
| <b>Feisty</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passionate, feels things intensely</li> <li>• Has difficulty controlling strong feelings, wants &amp; needs</li> </ul>      | <b>Look for →</b> | Program where each child has a primary provider, someone who knows & understands your child (note: all children would benefit from this) |

### ***Your child's reaction to the world ...***

|                                                                                                                         |                   |                                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Big Reactor</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate their feelings and don't hold back</li> </ul>   | <b>Look for →</b> | Providers who respect your child's emotions, but help him/her to express them in a more controlled way |
| <b>Low Reactor</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fuss very little, plays quietly and sleeps a lot</li> </ul> | <b>Look for →</b> | Providers who gently introduce new activities                                                          |

### ***Your child's activity level ...***

|                                                                                                                                  |                   |                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>High Activity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child is always on the go</li> </ul>                               | <b>Look for →</b> | Individual schedules, safe exploration and physical play |
| <b>Low Activity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children sit quietly, exploring with their ears and eyes</li> </ul> | <b>Look for →</b> | Small group settings that are less overwhelming          |

### ***Your child's social level ...***

|                                                                                                                                             |                   |                                                                             |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Super-Social</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enjoys approaching new people</li><li>• Are happiest when with others</li></ul> | <b>Look for →</b> | Opportunities for group play                                                |
| <b>Take-it-slow</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are shy around strangers</li><li>• Need time to warm up</li></ul>               | <b>Look for →</b> | Programs that allow children to choose when they'd like to play with others |

### ***Your child's tolerance to changes and challenges ...***

|                                                                                                                                                                                       |                   |                                                                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>High Tolerance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is not bothered by changes</li><li>• Copes well with frustration</li></ul>                                              | <b>Look for →</b> | Mixed-aged settings that offer enjoyable challenges & stimulation   |
| <b>Low Tolerance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Are sensitive to changes</li><li>• Gets upset with routine changes</li><li>• Easily frustrated &amp; impatient</li></ul> | <b>Look for →</b> | Same-age setting with developmentally appropriate toys & activities |

## ***Play is Important!!!***

.....

The first five years of a child's life is a crucial period in their development. Children who are nurtured and stimulated during these years are **much more** prepared for formal reading and math and are more likely to have the social skills they will need when it is time to start school. As parents you want the best for your child which would include maximizing their learning potential. During the early years **the source of learning is through play**. Some of the things your child may learn while he/she is playing are:



- **Physical Skills:** Gross Motor (large muscles) skills are developed as a child learns to reach, grasp, crawl, run, climb and balance. Fine motor (small muscles used for writing) are developed as children color, cut and handle small toys.
- **Cognitive Concepts:** Children learn to solve problems (What does this do? Does this puzzle piece fit here?) through play. Children also learn colors, numbers, size and shapes. They learn concepts such as bigger, smaller, too much, next to, etc...They have the ability to enhance their memory skills as well as their attention span. Children move on to higher levels of thought as they play in a more stimulating environment.
- **Language Skills:** Language develops as a child plays and interacts with others. This begins with parents playing cooing games, talking to, reading and singing with their children and advances to practical levels such as telling make-believe stories and jokes.

- **Social/Emotional skills:** Learning to cooperate, negotiate, take turns and play by the rules are all important skills learned in early games. These skills grow as the child plays. As a result, children learn the roles and rules of society. These social interactions also offer children opportunities to learn how to appropriately identify and express how they are feeling and to interpret and respond to the feelings of others.



When selecting a child care program, ensure that there are many opportunities for quality play. Large blocks of time should be dedicated to open ended activities that allow your child to interact with other children and their caregivers to pretend, problem solve and create.

## ***Questions and Concerns ...***

Choosing the right child care program is an important decision that will take some time and patients. Safe and positive child care sets the stage for healthy growth and development by shaping your child's brain development and learning potential. The Child Care Council is here to help you understand what to look for when selecting a quality program. Here are six tips that will help you make the best choice for you and your child.

1. Learn about the different types of child care programs
2. Visit programs while they are open and children are there
3. Visit at least three programs before making your final decision
4. While visiting:
  - Look around the child care setting carefully
  - Notice child/staff ratios, Health and Safety practices and balance of in and outdoor activities
  - Observe interactions between the child and the caregiver
  - Ask questions
  - Listen carefully to responses
5. Consider the cost, location and hours the child care program is open
6. Check References; talk to other parents who use or have used this child care program



Contact the Child Care Council if you need more suggestions or helpful tips for meeting with providers and asking detailed questions.

Once you have selected a child care setting and your child is in care, keep asking questions. Continue to check whether or not the program is still meeting your family's needs, as well as the needs of your child. **It is important that you stop by during the day from time to time and see how your child is doing.** Watch your child for changes in moods and attitudes.

If your child seems happy and his/her disposition has not changed chances are things are fine. However, things can change and you should watch for these signals of concern:

- Your child seems unhappy or talks about being afraid (for nonverbal children acts afraid)
- There is a lot of staff turnover and you do not recognize some of the people at the center or home
- The provider's behavior towards the children seems harsh
- The provider's demeanor has changed
- Children are left unsupervised
- There are not enough toys to play with or things to do
- Your child has injuries the provider cannot explain



If you are worried about your child, or are concerned about the quality of your child's care, you should visit the program and speak with the provider.

- Talk with your provider about concerns right away, as they happen
- Be clear about your concerns, and ask what they think about the causes
- Be clear about what you want to happen

If you are unable to resolve your concerns, if your concerns are serious or if you suspect that your child is being abused or neglected in any way, contact the Child Care Council at (315) 393-6474 or the New York State Office of Children & Family Services at (800) 732-5207 or the Child Abuse Hotline at **(800) 342-3720**.



### ***Friend & Family Care ...***

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Parents often choose to have a close friend or family member care for their child. This is especially true when there are no regulated child care options available or when work schedules do not align with provider schedules. Selecting a friend or family member can be an incredibly successful experience for you, your child and for them. However, parents should weigh the benefits and consider issues that could arise from such an arrangement. When it works this is a wonderful situation, but sometimes it doesn't turn out as expected. These situations can become very uncomfortable, stressful and difficult for both you and your friend or relative.

We have included an article in your materials from Child Care Aware entitled, "All in The Family – Using Relatives for Child Care." We encourage you to read this article, consider your options carefully and make informed choices.

## ***Things to Think About***

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### **Family Needs**

- ☐ I can easily get from the child care setting from home and work
- ☐ Transportation is available between school and the caregiver (or program is onsite) for my school-aged child
- ☐ The program is open during the hours that I need care
- ☐ The program is open during vacations and school holidays
- ☐ The programs payment policies meet my needs
- ☐ Nutritious meals and snacks are provided and included in the fees
- ☐ I may **visit the program anytime it is open**
- ☐ I will **receive a copy of the policies and rules for the program**
- ☐ I will be informed at least once a week about activities for the children
- ☐ Parent feedback is sought and used in making program improvements
- ☐ There will be opportunities for conferences with the provider regarding my child



### **The Program**

- ☐ The program is licensed or registered through the New York State Office of Children & Family Services (NYS OCFS)
- ☐ Child Staff ratios meet with NYS OCFS regulations (see program capacity guidelines pg 8)
- ☐ The size of the group meets with NYS OCFS regulations (see group size guidelines pg 8)
- ☐ There has been limited staff turnover
- ☐ Parents are asked to evaluate the program
- ☐ There are written policies and procedures (discipline, emergency evacuation)
- ☐ All staff is evaluated annually
- ☐ There is a written training plan for professional development
- ☐ The program is evaluated annually by someone outside the program
- ☐ The program is accredited by a national organization

## **The Caregiver**

- ☐ The caregiver has participated in professional development in topics such as Health & Safety, Nutrition, Child Development, First Aid and CPR, etc.
- ☐ The caregiver has experience caring for children
- ☐ The provider and everyone over 18 years old in the home have been fingerprinted and completed all required criminal and child abuse background checks.
- ☐ The caregiver continually updates training and/or education courses to learn more about the health, safety and development of children
- ☐ The caregiver greets each child and parent when coming to and leaving the program
- ☐ How does the caregiver handle children who are upset?
- ☐ The caregiver respects and understands the values and culture of the child's family

## **Health and Safety**

- ☐ Children are supervised by the caregiver and can be seen and heard at all times, including naptime
- ☐ The program is childproofed to prevent accidents. Precautions include: safety caps in electrical outlets, poisonous materials (medicines, cleaning products, etc..) are stored out of reach of children, childproof locks on cupboards, safety gates on stairs, etc..
- ☐ There is fencing to keep children away from pools, ponds and other bodies of water
- ☐ The caregiver regularly checks indoor and outdoor equipment for wear and tear
- ☐ The caregiver has a plan to handle fire and medical emergencies
- ☐ The caregiver knows how to handle minor injuries & what to do when medical attention is required
- ☐ There is a working phone where fire, police, ambulance and poison control numbers are posted
- ☐ The caregiver has an accessible, stocked first-aid-kit
- ☐ There are smoke detectors on each floor and multipurpose fire extinguishers in the program.
- ☐ There are two separate building exits
- ☐ Fire drills are practiced at least once per month (even during naptime)

## **Health and Safety continued**

- ☐ For school-aged children there is a system in place to keep track of those children that will be attending off-site activities such as tutoring, dance, music lessons or sports
- ☐ All children have up to date immunizations
- ☐ Children and caregivers wash their hands before eating/handling food, after using the

bathroom/changing diapers, touching bodily fluids, playing outside, petting animals, etc...

- ☐ The child care setting is clean
- ☐ Toys, furniture and surfaces are sanitized daily to prevent the spread of germs
- ☐ The caregiver's health care plan meets the needs of my child
- ☐ The caregiver is trained to give and keep records of medications
- ☐ Menus are posted or given to parents
- ☐ Meals and snacks include all four food groups
- ☐ Portion sizes are appropriate for the age of the children being served
- ☐ Food that are potential choking hazards (popcorn, carrots, raisins) are not served
- ☐ Self help skills and conversations are encouraged during snack and meal times
- ☐ School-aged children are able to snack when they arrive at the program and are given ample time to eat.
- ☐ Infant feeding schedules are planned with the parent
- ☐ Infants are held while being bottle fed
- ☐ Solid foods are introduced slowly and carefully



### **Your Child's Day**

- ☐ Activities are age appropriate and based on children's interests
- ☐ The caregiver talks to, reads stories to, sings songs with and encourages children to ask questions in order to promote the development of language
- ☐ Learning materials and toys offered are clean, in good repair and safe.
- ☐ There is a variety of toys available and enough toys for everyone
- ☐ Interactive toys are available for infants and toddlers
- ☐ There are soft pieces of furniture and toys when children need quiet space and time
- ☐ The outdoor place area is safe for the children to play in/on
- ☐ The caregiver takes the children outside every day unless the weather is bad
- ☐ Indoor space is large enough for infants to crawl safely and for active play when children cannot go outside
- ☐ No pool that requires dumping to keep the water fresh is in use

- ☐ There is a naptime scheduled every day
- ☐ Each child has his/her own crib, mat, cot or bed with clean blankets/sheets
- ☐ Infants sleep whenever needed; based on their individual schedule
- ☐ Infants sleep on their backs with no stuffed toys or loose bedding in order to prevent SIDS
- ☐ Caregivers work with parents when potty training a child
- ☐ Toileting accidents are handled calmly and positively
- ☐ T.V. and videos are limited to **educational purposes only** and are **only used for short periods**
- ☐ There are other activities available for those children who do not want to watch T.V. or a Video
- ☐ The use of handheld electronic games is limited for school-aged children.



### **Positive Discipline**

- ☐ Parents and caregivers agree on appropriate discipline
- ☐ The caregiver does not yell, spank, or use any type of negative punishment
- ☐ Infants are cared for with comforting voices and gentle touches
- ☐ Caregivers ensure that there is enough space and a variety of interesting activities available to avoid behaviors
- ☐ Frustrated toddlers and preschoolers are redirected to alternative activities
- ☐ Caregivers offer gentle reminders, set reasonable limits, encourage the use of words and help children to talking about their feelings
- ☐ Teasing, bullying and name calling are not permitted

### **\* IMPORTANT CONTRACT INFORMATION:**

- Read the program contract CAREFULLY
- ASK QUESTIONS for clarification
- **DO NOT SIGN** the contract UNLESS you will receive a copy
- COMPARE contracts and choose the program that best meets the needs of your family

## ***Helping Your Child Get Started in Care***

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Your child may be anxious and upset about being away from you and spending time in a new place with a new person. Here are some things you can do to help your child feel more comfortable:



- Talk to your child about what to expect. Tell a story about child care and the things that might happen there.
- Read books about going to school, such as: *The Kissing Hand* by Audrey Penn
- Try short times away from your child to get him/her used to being away from you. Never sneak away!!! This will only make your child more anxious.
- If possible, take your child to visit the program before he/she goes there for the day, and spend time there with your child.
- Talk to your child about what he/she will be doing every day. Let your child know that after he/she plays, has lunch and takes a nap you will be back.
- Ask the provider if your child can bring a family photo and favorite toy or stuffed animal so your child will feel more at home.
- Make sure that you spend time with your child at the end of the day. Talk about what your child did at the program that day.
- Acknowledge any artwork, etc.. that your child brings home at the end of the day.
- Try to avoid other major changes in your child's life when they begin care.
- It is important for your child to see you interacting with their early learning teacher or caregiver. Take time to share information and get to know them.



## ***Ways to Support Your Child Care Provider***

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Parents and child care providers share a common goal; supporting the growth and development of children. Working as a team with your child's provider will help to bridge the gap between home and child care ensuring, that your child's individual needs are being met. The following are steps that you can take to start building that team:

- Take the time to read the parent handbook and any other information the provider shares with you. This will keep you up to date & informed of the happenings within the program.
- Speak with the provider about your child's personality and general development and offer tips on approaches that seem to work best with your child.
- Alert the provider to any special needs your child may have, such as food allergies, so there are no surprises.
- Send your child to child care well rested, clean and well fed. This will help your child's mood and energy level helping to make the providers day run smoother.
- Ensure all contact information is current in order for your provider to be able to reach you in the case of an emergency.
- Reinforce self-help skills, disciplinary actions and other skills being taught to allow for consistency. This will help your child meet expectations quicker and easier.
- Appreciate that your provider is caring for a whole group of children.
- Get involved: read a story, share a talent or your culture, assist on field trips, etc...
- Share any changes in your child's situation such as: a new baby, separation of parents, illness, sleep disturbances, parent out of town, death of a pet, etc...Be sure to keep your provider up to date on these situations especially those involving legal issues.
- Inform your provider of medications you have given your child including possible side affects.
- Respect your provider's opening and closing times. Providers are working parents just like you and also have family responsibilities to attend to.
- If emergencies force you to be late call your provider and let them know. Once you arrive be sure to thank them for working the extra time.
- Notify providers in writing if someone different will be picking up your child. Ensure the person knows that they will be asked to show ID, this will help avoid an uncomfortable situation for your provider
- Keep ill children at home and have a back up plan in place for such cases.
- **Be prompt with payment.**
- Send children to child care in comfortable washable clothing that is appropriate for the weather. Have extra clothes available in case of accidents.
- Regularly thank your provider so they know their patience, hard work and love is appreciated.
- Address concerns early, before they become big issues.
- Provider Appreciation Day is the Friday BEFORE Mother's Day!

**Acronyms:**  
***Deciphering the Child Care Alphabet Soup***

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**BOCES:** Board of Cooperative Educational Services  
**CACFP:** Child and Adult Care Food Program  
**CAP:** Correction Action Plan  
**CCAP:** Child Care Assistance Program  
**CCDBG:** Child Care & Development Block Grant  
**CCRC:** Child Care Resource Center  
**CCR&R:** Child Care Resource and Referral  
**CDA:** Child Development Associate  
**CCoA:** Child Care Aware of America  
**CPS:** Child Protective Services  
**CPSC:** Consumer Product Safety Commission  
**CPSE:** Committee on Preschool Special Education  
**CSE:** Committee on Special Education  
**DCC/CCC:** Day Care Center/Child Care Center  
**DSS:** Department of Social Services  
**DOH:** Department of Health  
**ECE:** Early Childhood Education  
**ECERS:** Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale  
**ECLC:** Early Childhood Direction Center  
**EI:** Early Intervention  
**EITC:** Earned Income Tax Credit  
**EIP:** Educational Incentive Program  
**FCCERS:** Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale  
**FDC:** Family Day Care

**FICA:** Federal Contributions Act  
**FUTA:** Federal Unemployment Tax  
**GFDC:** Group Family Day Care  
**IEP:** Individualized Education Plan  
**IFSP:** Individualized Family Services Plan  
**ITA:** Intensive Technical Assistance  
**ITERS:** Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scale  
**LE:** Legally Exempt  
**MAT:** Medication Administration Training  
**NACCRRA:** National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agency  
**NAEYC:** National Association for the Education of Young Children  
**NYSAEYC:** New York State Association for the Education of Young Children  
**OCFS:** Office of Child and Family Services  
**OT:** Occupational Therapy  
**PT:** Physical Therapy  
**QA:** Quality Assurance  
**SACC:** School-aged Program  
**SLCCC:** St. Lawrence Child Care Council  
**SLCDSS:** St. Lawrence County Department of Social Services  
**SRO:** Syracuse Regional Office  
**TA:** Technical Assistance  
**TANF:** Temporary Assistance for Needy Families  
**UPK:** Universal Pre-Kindergarten  
**WDI:** Workforce Development Institute  
**WIC:** Women Infants and Children

## ***Local and National Resources***

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| <p><b>The St. Lawrence Child Care Council</b></p> <p>This agency offers families assistance by phone, through parenting workshops, newsletters and in person providing referrals to local child care providers and access to information about quality indicators, State licensing requirements and the availability of child care assistance options.<br/> <a href="http://www.stlawrencechildcare.org">www.stlawrencechildcare.org</a></p> <p>(800) 246-5352</p> | <p><b>New York State Office for Children &amp; Families – Syracuse Regional Office</b></p> <p>This agency provides information about child care regulations and licensing requirements. Parents can contact this office to file a complaint.<br/> <a href="http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us">www.ocfs.state.ny.us</a></p> <p>(315) 423-1202<br/> (800) 732-5207 (complaints)</p> |
| <p><b>The North Country Prenatal/Perinatal Council</b></p> <p>This agency provides parents with information regarding WIC and affordable health insurance for their family via Child Health Plus and Family Health Plus.<br/> <a href="http://www.ncppc.org">www.ncppc.org</a></p> <p>(800) 279-8679</p>                                                                                                                                                           | <p><b>St. Lawrence County Public Health Department</b></p> <p>This agency provides a wide variety of health services and programs to residents of the county.<br/> <a href="http://www.co.st-lawrence.ny.us/Departments/PublicHealth">www.co.st-lawrence.ny.us/Departments/PublicHealth</a></p> <p>(315) 386 -2325</p>                                                      |
| <p><b>North Coast Therapy</b></p> <p>This agency provides Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy and Speech Language Pathology, to clients in their home, residence, or school.<br/> <a href="http://www.northcoasttherapy.com">www.northcoasttherapy.com</a></p> <p>(315) 388-7703</p>                                                                                                                                                                            | <p><b>The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)</b></p> <p>AAP provides online resources that support the health, safety and well-being of infants, children, adolescents and young adults.<br/> <a href="http://www.aap.org">www.aap.org</a> <a href="http://www.healthychildren.org">www.healthychildren.org</a><br/> (parents corner)</p>                                 |
| <p><b>Catholic Charities</b></p> <p>This program offers parenting classes, maternity services and information regarding adoption.<br/> (315) 393 -2660<br/> <a href="http://www.cathcharities.org">www.cathcharities.org</a></p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <p><b>Child Care Aware Parent Resources</b></p> <p>A non-profit committed to helping parents through online resources, find the best information on locating quality child care and child care resources in their community.<br/> <a href="https://www.childcareaware.org/families/">https://www.childcareaware.org/families/</a></p>                                       |

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| <b>National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)</b><br><br>NAEYC is dedicated to improving the wellbeing of all young children, with particular focus on the quality of educational and developmental services for all children from birth through age 8.<br><a href="http://www.naeyc.org">www.naeyc.org</a> | <b>Zero to Three</b><br><br>Zero to Three is a national organization that provides child development information for parents and professionals regarding infants and toddlers.<br><a href="http://www.zerotothree.org">http://www.zerotothree.org</a> |
| <b>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention</b><br><a href="https://www.cdc.gov/injury/index.html">https://www.cdc.gov/injury/index.html</a>                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>National Safety Council</b><br><a href="http://www.nsc.org">www.nsc.org</a>                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>U.S. Consumer Products Safety Council</b><br><a href="http://www.cpsc.gov">www.cpsc.gov</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>National Highway Traffic Safety Administration</b><br><a href="http://www.nhtsa.gov">www.nhtsa.gov</a>                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>Kids Health</b><br><a href="http://www.kidshealth.org">www.kidshealth.org</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>Safe Kids USA</b><br><a href="http://www.safekids.org">www.safekids.org</a>                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Safety Belt Seat</b><br><a href="http://www.carseat.org">www.carseat.org</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>Burn Prevention Foundation</b><br><a href="http://www.burnprevention.org/site/resources">www.burnprevention.org/site/resources</a>                                                                                                                 |
| <b>New York State Department of Health</b><br><a href="http://www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/injury_prevention">www.health.state.ny.us/prevention/injury_prevention</a>                                                                                                                                                        | <b>National Fire Protection Association</b><br><a href="http://www.nfpa.org">www.nfpa.org</a>                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>The Shaken Baby Alliance</b><br><a href="http://www.shakenbaby.org">www.shakenbaby.org</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | <b>National Poison Control Center</b><br><a href="http://www.poison.org">www.poison.org</a>                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>United States Food and Drug Administration</b><br><a href="http://www.fda.gov">www.fda.gov</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |



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