



Choosing Child Care: A Checklist for Quality

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS	✓	COMMENTS
Is this program licensed? (A business license is NOT a license to care for children.)		
Is the program accredited or participating in Virginia Quality?		
How many of the staff have been employed for over one year? (How long has your child's potential provider been there?)		
What additional fees do you charge? (Absences, vacations, activities, etc.)		
What is the policy regarding medication administration, illness or injury? (Is child care staff trained to give medications? Is there a sick room on-site? Is there a nurse on staff? What if the provider is ill or injured or sick?)		
If the provider allows screen time, what is the content and are there limits? (Does this align with the recommendations set forth by the American Academy of Pediatrics?)		
What is the policy regarding pick up and drop off? (Can you drop off anytime or during specific hours? Who is able to pick up your child and what is the screening process?)		
Does the program welcome parents to visit anytime throughout the day?		
How can parents get involved in the program and/or classroom?		
Is your child's teacher trained in age-specific development?		
How will you be notified of what is happening each day? (Is there an app? Daily sheets? A weekly newsletter? Parent/teacher conferences?)		
How much time is designated for outdoor play each day?		
What is their behavior policy and how do they address misbehavior?		
Is the ratio appropriate for your child's age group(s)? (See back page for more information on ratios and point systems.)		
IS THE ENVIRONMENT SAFE?	✓	COMMENTS
Is the front door locked and secure? (Do you enter with a key, a keycode, or are you visually screened and buzzed in?)		
Are there any guns or weapons on the property? (If so, are they locked and secure?)		
Are the outdoor play areas safe and secure? (ex: Fenced-in play areas, gated pool, playground free of hazards or safety concerns)		
Is everything childproofed by age-appropriate standards? (ex: covers on outlets, safety buckles on chairs, no choking hazards, cleaners locked and out of reach)		
IS THE PROVIDER PREPARED FOR AN EMERGENCY?	✓	COMMENTS
Is your child's teacher trained in First Aid and CPR?		
How will provider communicate with you in the event of an emergency?		
Does the child care program have an emergency plan? How often is it practiced? (ex: plans for fire, tornado, hurricane, intruder, safe place, etc.)		
IF THE TOUR GOES WELL	✓	COMMENTS
Ask for references of families who have used the program		
Ask for copy of parent handbook. (Be sure to understand anything you sign and get a copy.)		
Review inspection records on the VA Dept of Social Services website at www.dss.virginia.gov/facility/search/cc.cgi or by calling (800) 543-7545.		

THINGS TO CONSIDER FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS	✓	COMMENTS
What is the nap routine? Are there safe sleep procedures in place? (ex: sleeping on backs only, sleeping in cribs only, no blankets in cribs, no sleeping in car seats)		
What is the diapering procedure? (Who provides diapers? Is cloth diapering permitted? Is the diapering station sanitary?)		
What is the feeding procedure? (If breastfeeding, is there a private and comfortable place on-site? If formula feeding, who provides the formula? If eating solids, who supplies food? How are food allergies handled?)		
How are the children grouped? (Are crawlers and walkers separated? Do children bond with one primary caregiver?)		
Are children supervised at all times , even when they are sleeping?		
What is your policy regarding infant containers? (If bouncers, walkers, and chairs are allowed is there a limit? Ensure not used for napping.)		
THINGS TO CONSIDER FOR PRESCHOOLERS	✓	COMMENTS
What curriculum do they follow?		
Is there a balance of active and quiet activities throughout the day and experiences planned for all areas of development? (ex: blocks, dramatic play, art, science, books/early literacy)?		
What is the policy regarding lunch and snacks? (Who provides food? If provided, are they healthy and nutritious? Is water always available both indoors and outdoors? Are fresh fruit and vegetables served? How are allergies handled?)		
Do children go on field trips? How are you notified of upcoming trips? (Is this outlined in the handbook?)		
Notice teacher/child interactions and ensure they are positive (Are children greeted with a smile? Does the teacher get down on the child's level to talk?)		
THINGS TO CONSIDER FOR SCHOOL-AGERS	✓	COMMENTS
Is transportation available to and from your child's school?		
Is the program open during school closures? (ex: teacher work days, holidays, breaks, summer, inclement weather, etc.)		
What is the policy regarding lunch and snacks? (Who provides food? If provided, are they healthy and nutritious? Is water always available both indoors and outdoors? Are fresh fruit and vegetables served? How are allergies handled?)		
How does the program handle homework time?		
How does your school-age feel about the program? Let them weigh in!		
THINGS TO CONSIDER FOR SPECIAL NEEDS	✓	COMMENTS
Do the staff/caregivers have the appropriate training and experience to do so?		
Is the program willing to work with specialists to plan an appropriate program for your child and allow specialists to offer services on site if needed?		
How will your child's teacher/caregiver explain your child's special need to other children in the group?		
Should you need transportation, are they able to accommodate?		

Every child in Virginia is protected by law against child abuse and neglect. Allegations of abuse and neglect are investigated by local departments of social services. The Child Protective hotline number is 1-800-552-7096.

To search for a child care providers inspection record, visit www.dss.virginia.gov/facility/search/cc.cgi or call 1-800-543-7545. This number can also be used to file a complaint.

Child Care Center Ratio Guidelines by Age

Birth - 16 mths	1 : 4
16 mths - 2 yrs	1 : 5
2 - 3 yrs	1 : 8
3 - 4 yrs	1 : 10
5 +	1 : 18

Family Child Care Home Point System by Age

Birth - 16 mths	4 pts
16 mths - 2 yrs	3 pts
2 - 4 yrs	2 pts
5 - 9 yrs	1 pts
10 +	0 pts

Questions?
We can help!
866-KIDS-TLC





Frequently Asked Questions

Does Child Care Aware of Virginia offer assistance in paying for child care?

Child Care Aware of Virginia does not offer financial assistance to help cover the cost of care. We are a resource and referral agency here to help families understand their child care options and find provider options based on individual needs.

Are there any programs that help with the cost of care?

- The Child Care Subsidy Program offered through the Department of Social Services provides financial assistance to eligible families to help pay for the cost of child care so they can work or attend education or training programs. Contact your local Department of Social Services office or visit <https://commonhelp.virginia.gov/access/> to see if you're eligible and to start an application.
- If you or your spouse are active duty military and the on-base care option is not available, you may be eligible for military fee assistance. Contact Child Care Aware of America for more information at 1-800-424-2246 or visit them online at www.childcareaware.org.
- Some providers offer their own financial assistance options, such as a sliding fee scale based on income, scholarships, or negotiable rates. These financial assistance options are offered through the individual provider and Child Care Aware of Virginia is not involved. Ask our Referral Specialist if there are any providers who offer these options near you.

What is the difference between a referral and a recommendation?

Child Care Aware of Virginia provides child care referrals, not recommendations. Your referral list was created using your specific needs such as your child's age, the times you need care, the type of care you are looking for, and any additional needs you may have mentioned. These providers have met health and safety standards required by the state, but we make no claim as to their suitability for your family, and we do not endorse or encourage your selection of any specific provider. Your provider choice is your own. Please conduct thorough interviews with each provider you consider.

I've got my list. Now what do I do?

Once you've received your list, you'll want to start your process of assessing the quality and suitability of the providers you've been referred to. Look over their information and check out the provider's licensing inspection record to note if they've had parent complaints or violations in the past. Contact the providers to ask if they have availability and to set up a tour. Be sure to print out your Choosing Child Care Checklist to bring along with you. When you've found a provider you like, ask them about their registration process and secure your child's spot!

None of these providers worked for my family. What do I do now?

Check in with our Referral Specialist to discuss adjusting your search to find additional providers that may work. If there are no additional providers to contact, you may want to consider alternative care options, such as trusted family members or hiring an individual caregiver.

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Summary of Child Care in Virginia

Type of Care	Description	How many children can this type legally care for?	How does the state monitor this program?	State run background checks on this type of care?	Can I view recent inspections on the VDSS website?	Does Child Care Aware of Virginia refer this type of care?
Licensed Child Care Center	Child care facilities that separate children by age or grade level.	Ask for capacity. See ratio guidelines below	Inspected twice a year.	✓	✓	✓
Licensed Family Child Care Home	Child care facilities that operate in a home.	12 max but cannot exceed 16 pts. See point system below.	Inspected twice a year.	✓	✓	✓
Religiously Exempt Child Care Programs	Child care centers located within or affiliated with a church.	Ask for capacity. See ratio guidelines below.	Unannounced compliance inspections.	✓	✓	✓
License Exempt Child Care Programs	This includes certified preschool and recreational or instructional exempt programs.	Ask for capacity. See ratio guidelines below.	No inspections.	✗	✗	✓
Voluntarily Registered Family Child Care Home	Smaller child care facilities that operate in a home.	4 max	Inspected prior to registration and every two years.	✓	✗	✓
Unregulated Family Child Care Home	Smaller child care facilities that operate in a home and are not monitored or regulated by the state.	4 max	No inspections.	✗	✗	✗
Nanny/ Au Pair	Child care in your own home that is not monitored or regulated by the state.	4 max	No inspections.	✗	✗	✗

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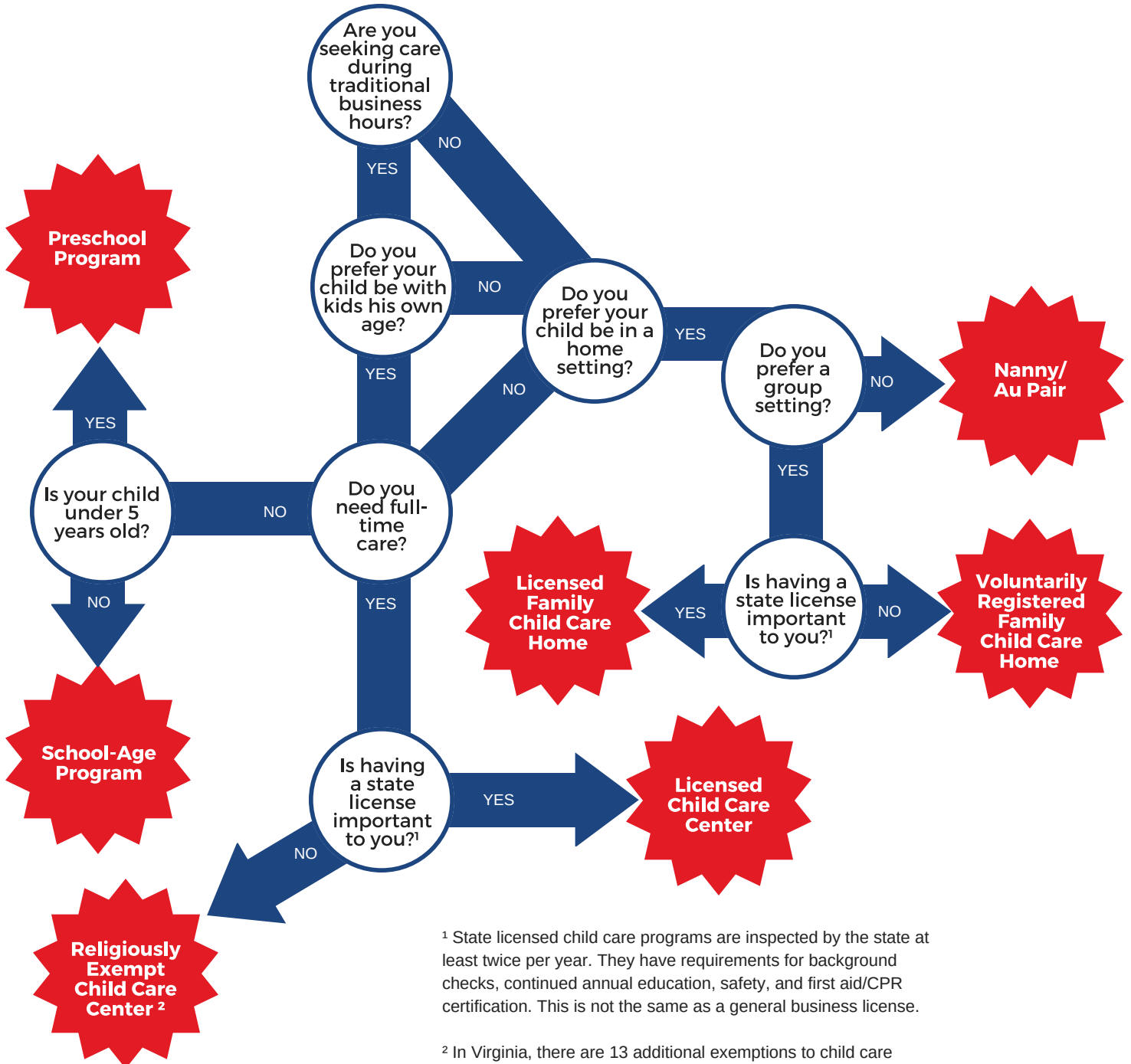
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What type of child care fits your family best?



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