

Child Care Matters

A parent's guide to choosing
quality child care



Eastern Fraser Valley Child Care Coalition
in partnership with Success by 6

Choosing Quality Child Care

We all want what's best for our children. Choosing quality child care takes time but it is in your best interest, and more importantly, your child's best interest to find child care that best fits the needs of your child and encourages healthy development.

The checklist and questions included in this booklet are designed to assist you as your search for quality child care often takes more than one interview.

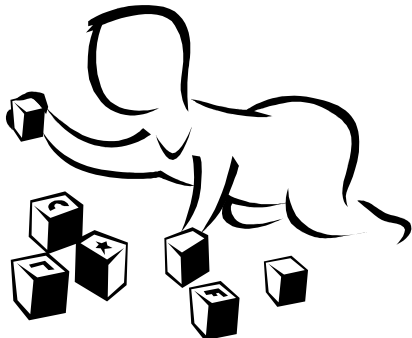
You will also find this booklet, with checklist and questions available for print on our website.

Eastern Fraser Valley Child Care Coalition: www.efvccc.ca

Child Care Resource & Referral: www.ccr.bc.ca 1-888-338-6622

Acknowledgements

- Denise Thandi, United Way of the Fraser Valley
- Jerry Waddell, Abbotsford Child Care Resource & Referral
- Laura Hope, Mission/Agassiz Child Care Resource & Referral
- Kim Paolini, Hope Child Care Resource & Referral
- Barb Presseau, Chilliwack Child Care Resource & Referral



This booklet was produced by the
 Eastern Fraser Valley Child Care Coalition
 in partnership with Success by 6

For more information call:
 604-852-1236

www.efvccc.ca



The Eastern Fraser Valley Childcare Coalition promotes community awareness regarding child care needs and challenges for families and employers, reinforces the connections between the importance of the early years to healthy lifelong development via quality childcare environments, ensuring accessibility to the myriad of community resources currently available to families and to build support for changes needed in child care policy and practices—with government and in workplaces.

Table of Contents

The Early Years.....	1
Quality Child Care.....	2
Types of Child Care.....	2
Licence-Not-Required (LNR) Child Care Options	3
1. RLNR Child Care	
2. LNR Child Care	
3. In-Own-Home Care	
Licensed Child Care Options	4
1. Group Child Care	
2. Multi-Age Child Care	
3. Preschools	
4. Family Child Care	
5. Group Child Care (School Age)	
6. Occasional Child Care	
Supported Child Development	5
Financial Support	5
Child Care Subsidy	
Supported Child Care Support Payment	
Getting Started	6
Child Care Resource & Referral	7
Checklists:	8, 9, 10
The First Call	
Staff & Facility Observations	
Additional questions	
Making Your Decision	11
Important Business Matters	11
Monitoring the Child Care Setting	12

The Early Years

Age birth to six—is an extremely important time. The early years are considered to be *the most important* developmental phase in a person's life. According to scientific studies, the years from newborn to age five are when most of the human brain's capacity and pathways are established (Shore, 1997). Approximately 90 percent of an adult's brain capacity and architecture are formed by the age of five. Research now shows that the more stimulating and nurturing the early environment, the more positive connections are formed in the brain and the better the child thrives in all aspects of their life. Young children need to spend their time in caring, responsive, language-rich environments. They need opportunities to play, to explore and to learn how to socialize.

One of the most important ingredients in making sure your child has every chance to grow a strong, resourceful brain are secure loving relationships with you and others.

This means:

- Interacting with your child by talking, playing, singing or reading;
- Lots of holding and cuddling (this kind of physical contact stimulates children's brain to release hormones that they need to grow);
- Praising and encouraging your child;
- Establishing regular routines and rituals;
- Creating a safe environment for independent playing;
- Choosing quality child care;
- Being selective about what your child watches on TV;
- Teaching appropriate behaviours.



Monitoring the Child Care Setting

You will want to make sure that you and your child continue to be happy with the child care provider you have chosen.

Always talk to your child about how the day went. Listen to your child's feelings and be alert for warning signs – such as changes in your child's usual behaviour – that could indicate something is wrong with your child care arrangement.

Have regular conversations with your provider. If you have any concerns or questions, discuss them with your child care provider and try to arrive at a solution that works for both of you.

If you continue to have concerns about the care your child is receiving, it is important to discuss them. If your provider is a Registered Licence-not-Required provider, contact the Child Care Resource and Referral Program. If your provider is Licensed, contact the licensing office.



If you are worried about the possible abuse of your child or any child in a child care setting, you must report your concerns immediately. Watch for signs such as; fearful of going or anxious to leave to the facility, unexplained injuries, or talk of inappropriate actions of an adult or other children. Contact your local Ministry for Children and Families office, or – if the facility is licensed – the Medical Health Officer through your local health authority. You can also call the Helpline for Children, toll-free. Dial 310-1234 (no area code needed).

**Ministry for Children & Family Development:
1-800-663-7867
Medical Health Officer : 1-800-663-7867
www.hls.gov.bc.ca/ccf/child_care.html www.healthspace.ca/fha**

Making Your Decision

Once you've visited several child care settings, it's time to consider how each meets your family's needs and values.

- Review the information you gathered.
- Trust your own initial feelings about the physical environment, the program and the people.
- Finally, contact the provider you've selected to confirm your decision.

(It's also important to thank the other providers, letting them know you have chosen someone).

Remember: The CCR is always available to offer further support if needed. www.ccr.bc.ca 1-888-338-6622

Starting your child in a new child care setting is an exciting opportunity for them to learn and grow. You share a role with childhood professionals in making your child feel safe and secure during this time.

Here are some ways you can help:

- Be enthusiastic about change and your child will be to.
- If possible, start your child care on a very part-time basis so they can become comfortable with you leaving.
- On the first few days, spend a couple of extra minutes helping your child feel comfortable but remember not to prolong the goodbye. Most children improve once you have left.
- Always say goodbye to your child. Be firm but friendly about separating.
- Never ridicule a child for crying. Instead make supportive statements like "it's hard to say goodbye."

It is normal for you and your child to take some time to adjust.

Important Business

It's essential that the child care provider maintains accurate and current records. These records should include policies and procedures, an agreement (contract), the child's medical history, family and emergency contact information, and the names of those authorized to pick up the child.

The agreement (contract) may include such items as: hours and days of care; fees and when they are due, what the fees include (eg. meals/snacks). The policies should include what to do if the child is ill; how the child's behaviour will be guided and what to do in an emergency.

Quality Child Care

Quality child care promotes positive social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development.

Research has confirmed that one of the key elements in quality child care is the child care provider, so choosing a provider who has your child's best interest at heart, is vital. Look for providers who are warm, caring and attentive to children's individual needs (Galinsky & Phillips, 1998). The provider should be culturally sensitive and accepting of differences. The provider should use positive discipline that teaches rather than punishes. The provider should spend time interacting and responding to the children, celebrating successes, building confidence and nurturing their self esteem.

Another key element is the environment. It should be safe, clean, comfortable and have some organized activity areas. There should be enough toys, activities, materials and equipment available and they need to be developmentally appropriate for all children. The environment needs space for resting, space for quiet and active play, as well as the opportunity for regular outdoor play.

Children in high-quality early childhood programs have been found to form closer and more secure attachments with care providers, show more positive interactions with peers, have larger vocabularies, and have better pre-reading and pre-math skills.

Types of Child Care

In British Columbia, there are two basic child care categories:

LICENSED and **LICENCE-NOT-REQUIRED (LNR)** child care. Whether or not a child care program needs a license depends primarily on how many children a child care provider is looking after.

BC law says that child care providers who look after more than two children or a sibling group, not related to them must have a license.

Licence-Not-Required Child Care Options

Unlicensed or Licence-not-required child care providers can care for 2 children or a sibling group, that are not related to themselves by blood or marriage, at any one time.

1. Registered Licence-not-Required Care (RLNR)

RLNR providers are registered with a Child Care Resource and Referral Program. They can care for 2 children or a sibling group, not related to themselves by blood or marriage, at any one time. Registration means they have met a number of provincial standards, including; criminal record checks, character and physicians references, a home-setting review, first aid training and child care training. Some of the benefits of registration include; support, training, access to a resource library and to group liability insurance. Also, families of the children you care for will be eligible for a higher subsidy rate than non-registered LNRS.

Child Care Resource & Referral :
1-888-338-6622 www.ccr.bc.ca

2. Licence-not-Required Care (LNR) or unlicensed

LNR providers can care for two children or a sibling group, not related to themselves by blood or marriage, at any one time. You are solely responsible for supervising and monitoring the quality of care provided in the LNR child care arrangement.

3. In-Own-Home Care

In-own-home care is where you arrange for someone to look after your child in your own home. You choose how to screen the provider. When using in-own-home care, you are considered an employer and must make both Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan payments.

If you are interested in in-own-home care, you will need to contact both Revenue Canada and the Worker's Compensation Board.

Revenue Canada: www.cra-arc.gc.ca 1-800-959-8281

Workers Compensation: www.Worksafebc.com 1-888-967-5377

Additional Questions

- Why did you become a child care provider?
- Do you have any plans for further child care training?
- How do you help a new child become comfortable?
- How do you discipline children who are misbehaving?
- How do you handle difficult situations or behaviors – for example, how would you deal with a child who won't stop Crying, refuses to eat, won't cooperate?
- Do you plan a daily program? What is a typical day/week?
- How often do you go outside, do art, do music, have free-play, have story-time?
- Does your program have any special features?
- What arrangements do you have for children who do not sleep at rest times?
- Do you transport children?
- Do you have a contract or other business forms?
- Where are medications stored? Do you give medications? Do you use a checklist to make sure children receive the proper medications at the proper time? Is your 1st Aid up to date?
- Can I call you or stop by regularly to find out about my child's progress?
- How often do you use TV or DVDs and what type of shows?
- What are your procedures in case of a child falling ill, an accident, fire, earthquake, etc?
- Do you charge a fine for late pick-up?
- How much notice do I have to give you if and when I want to withdraw my child?
- Do you have liability insurance?
- What are your arrangements for when you are ill or on vacation?
- Can you give me at least 2 references, preferably of families who have used your setting?
- Can I view your last licensing inspection report (if provider is licensed)
- Who else may have access to my children? Have they had a criminal record check?

Staff & Facility Observations

Child Care name: _____

Does the Staff:

- Listen to children when they speak and respond with interest and respect?
- Accept and value the children's ideas and suggestions?
- Display a sense of humour?
- Respond with care and understanding to a child who may be fearful, shy, upset, hurt or angry?
- Encourage children to cooperate with each other?
- Promote the development of problem-solving skills and a sense of independence?
- Set reasonable limits for behavior and respond to inappropriate behavior in a fair, consistent, respectful manner?
- Initiate conversations with the children other than instructions, announcements and commands?
- Take time to be alone with individual children?
- Allow children a choice in many situations?
- Make the children feel good about themselves?

Does the Program:

- Combine both individual play and group activities?
- Provide opportunities for children to explore their environment in different ways – ie. through music and creative movement, fantasy play, construction toys, games, outdoor play and field trips?
- Offer a balance between free play and organized activities?
- Have a consistent yet flexible schedule?
- Follow routines for rest, toileting and mealtimes in a relaxed manner?
- Reflect our multicultural society?

The Facility & Environment :

- is safe (ie. cupboards with cleaning agents are locked; kitchen knives are out of reach, stairways are gated, there is a fire extinguisher, smoke detectors and plug covers).
- is clean, warm, and inviting.
- is well lit and comfortable in temperature.
- has children's artwork displayed.
- includes areas for a child to play alone, areas for both quiet and active play, and a safe outdoor play area.
- offers a good supply of varied, challenging, and age or developmentally appropriate toys and play materials. Toys and play materials must be in good repair and easy for children to access.

Licensed Child Care Options

Licensed child care programs must meet and comply with the Community Care & Assisted Living Act and the provincial Child Care Licensing Regulation. Licensing regulations cover health and safety requirements, licence application requirements, staffing qualifications, staff to child ratio, space and equipment, and program standards. Licensing Officers investigate complaints and monitor licensed child care programs to ensure they continue to meet the provincial regulations.

You can view the child care licensing regulation at www.hls.gov.bc.ca/ccf/

1. Group Child Care

Group child care serves children from 30 months to school entry (Grade 1), and children from birth to 36 months.

2. Multi Age Child Care

Multi age child care is similar to Group Care but serves children from birth to age 12.

3. Preschools

Preschools serve children from 30 months to school entry. Preschools are part-day programs, typically operating on the school-year, September to June.

4. Family Child Care

Family child care is offered in the child care providers own home, and serves a maximum of 7 children from birth to age 12.

5. In-Home Multi Age Child Care

In-home Multi Age care is offered in the child care providers own home, and serves a maximum of 8 children from birth to age 12.

5. Group Child Care (School Age)

Group child care school age serve school-age children, including kindergarten, who require care outside normal school hours.

6. Occasional Child Care

Occasional child care is available for children who are at least 18 months old. It is for part-time or occasional care only. Care is for a maximum of 8 hours a day and no more than 40 hours per calendar month.

**To contact the health authority community care
licensing program in your area
1-800-663-7867 www.hls.gov.bc.ca/ccf/**

Supported Child Development

Some children require extra support. Supported Child Development is a community-based program that assists families of children with extra support needs to access inclusive child care that meets families needs.

For help in finding Supported Child Care, please contact your local CCRR or Ministry of Children and Family Development office.

Supported Child Development:
www.scdp.bc.ca or www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/early_childhood/scd.htm

What is “developmentally appropriate activities” ?

This means that the children’s emotional, social, cognitive and physical growth is supported through activities that are appropriate for their age and stage of development. Children learn best through meaningful activities that relate to their own life experiences. Chosen activities reflect appropriate goals and enable children to grow, create and learn at their own pace.

Financial Support

Child Care Subsidy

Child care subsidy is a government program that helps low and moderate income families pay for child care. To apply for subsidy, please contact your local CCRR or the Child Care Subsidy Program.

Supported Child Care Support Payment

If you have a child with special needs, you may be eligible for additional support through Supported Child Care funding. (This assistance is in addition to the basic child care subsidy.) To find out more, please contact your local Ministry for Children and Family Development office.

Child Care Subsidy Program: www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/childcare/application.htm

Ministry for Children & Family Development: 1-800-663-7867
www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/regions/regional_offices.htm

First Call Checklist

Child Care name: _____

- Do you have space available? Yes / No
- Are you licensed? Yes / No If Yes, what type _____
- Are you registered with a Child Care Resource & Referral Program? Yes / No
- How many children do you care for? _____
- What ages are the children in your care? _____
- What are your hours of operation? _____
- What are your fees? _____
- What child care experience do you have?

- What training do you have? (child development, first aid) _____

- Do you accept children who require extra support? Yes / No
- What supplies/meals do you provide?

Additional Comments:

Interview at the facility booked for: _____



Child Care Resource & Referral

CCRR is your community's **BEST** source of child care information and resources. They can provide you with referrals to regulated child care providers, advice about choosing quality child care, and information and applications on government subsidies for child care.

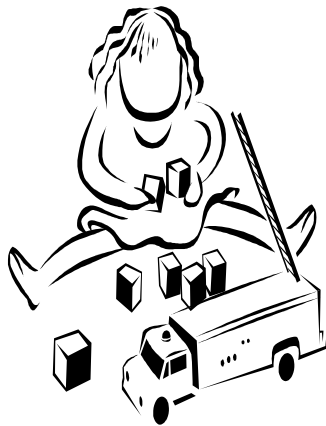
To find the number of the CCRR nearest you
1-888-338-6622

www.crrr.bc.ca



What children learn when they play:

How things work
The nature of materials
Concepts
Rhythm
Words and ideas
How to cooperate and socialize
How to solve problems
How to use their imaginations
To be creative
How to use their bodies
That they are capable individuals



Getting Started

Your choice of a child care arrangement will depend upon a number of factors, including your child's age; your schedule; your family values; where you want it located; and what your family can afford to pay.

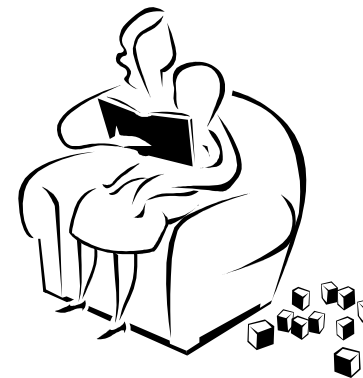
1) Begin by developing a list of the things you feel are important, such as the qualifications of the provider, their approach to guiding children's behaviour and what a typical day looks like.

If you have a child who needs extra support, you may also want to identify your child's unique needs, strengths and interests. Include any special concerns you may have about your child's ability to enjoy, participate in and benefit from child care.

2) Contact your local CCRR. It is your **BEST** source of information on child care services and can provide you with referrals to local care providers and information and applications for government subsidies for child care.

3) Call a number of child care settings using the First Call Checklist (*found on page 8*) It's a good idea to visit a few settings and do some comparisons. Its also wise to visit at different times of the day to view different aspects of the program.

4) Take your child to visit your final choices. Remember to check references and to talk to other families who have children in the child care setting.



When you invest in children you are investing in a lifetime