



**SNOHOMISH
COUNTY**
HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Child Care Health Outreach Program
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www.snohd.org/childcare

Choosing a Healthy Child Care



An Important Choice

During the first few years, a child learns many of the social skills and basic tools that are used throughout life – and finding a child care to promote this development is one of the many important decisions a parent must make. Many options are available, from home care with just a few children, to larger child care centers and early learning programs. Factors that you need to consider include availability, cost, location, quality, and the personality of your child. This handout is intended to help you choose a child care that will provide a *safe, healthy, and nurturing* environment for your child.

Get a Referral from Child Care Aware of Washington

For help in finding programs to meet your family's needs, please contact Child Care Aware of Washington Family Center and a Child Care Specialist will assist you with your search. Call 1-800-446-1114 or visit their website at www.childcareawarewa.org/families.

You can also search for child cares online at www.findchildcarewa.org.

Find out if there are Licensing Concerns

Child cares in Washington State are licensed by the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF). By having a license, providers are expected to follow basic health and safety standards, such as handwashing, written policies, ratios, and background checks. (WAC 110-300) Visit www.dcyf.wa.gov for more information on the licensing agency.

If you go to www.findchildcarewa.org, click on "View Details" for a particular child care and scroll to the bottom, you can view the most recent inspection report and see if there have been any recent complaints.

[Early Achievers](#) is an optional quality assurance program through the state which helps child care providers offer meaningful early learning experiences. Ask if your child care participates.

Spend Time at the Child Care

To get a sense of how the teachers and children interact and conduct their daily routines, it helps to sit in the provider's home child care or the center classroom where your child would be enrolled. Plan to spend time watching without interfering. The checklist on the back is a guide for parents who are looking for child care. These guidelines were chosen as they are indicators of a program that promotes health, safety, and well-being. No child care will meet *all* of these guidelines but you can be assured that if providers are following many of these recommendations, then the program is committed to providing quality care and dedicated to promoting the growth and development of your child.

QUICK LINKS

To get referral assistance –

Child Care Aware of Washington
Family Center
www.childcareawarewa.org/families
1-800-446-1114

To look up child cares online –

www.findchildcarewa.org

To report child care licensing concerns –

Call 1-866-END-HARM
(1-866-363-4276)

To report cases of COVID in child care facilities –

Call the Snohomish County Health
Department at 425-339-5278
or email
shd.childcarehealth@co.snohomish.wa.us



A Parent's Checklist for Choosing a Healthy Child Care



- ❑ Children are greeted by the staff upon arrival. Staff take time to assess the child for signs of illness. Sick children are sent home.
- ❑ Children are reminded to wash hands before snack/lunch, after toileting, and after playing outside. Providers supervise handwashing. Children can reach the sink, soap, and paper towels by themselves.
- ❑ Diapering is done in a separate area, away from eating areas. Providers wash the hands of toddlers and older infants at the sink after a diaper change.
- ❑ There are lots of toys within a child's easy reach. Toys are clean and age-appropriate. Children help with toy clean-up.
- ❑ Toys that children put in their mouths are removed and sanitized before another child plays with the same toy.
- ❑ Many books are available and within reach for children to look at throughout the day. The room has a quiet corner with cozy objects where children can read or work quietly. Lighting levels are adequate for reading.
- ❑ Classrooms and playgrounds include a variety of play zones such as quiet corners, dramatic play, active play, gardens, and fine motor areas.
- ❑ Playground has protective surfacing under all climbing equipment, even climbers that are close to the ground. Climbers are 6 feet away from all objects. The equipment is age-appropriate and not too tall.

- ❑ Staff plays with the children on the floor or at the child's level. Providers interact with the children on the playground.
- ❑ Staff uses a range of emotional support techniques such as ignoring negative behaviors, appropriate consequences, cool-off, and re-direction. Emphasis is placed on teaching self-discipline and enhancing self-esteem. Food is never used as a reward or punishment. Staff help children work through conflicts together.
- ❑ Staff use games or songs to transition the group to a new activity. Enough time is allowed to finish activities and children are given detailed information about the next activity. Children follow a regular routine when getting ready for lunch and nap time.
- ❑ Staff sit, eat, and converse with the children during meals/snacks, in a family style setting. Staff talk positively about the meal. Children are encouraged to make their own food choices among the foods offered. Children help with meal set-up and clean-up.
- ❑ The 3-week menu cycle includes a variety of fresh seasonal fruits and vegetables. Servings of food and beverages that are high in saturated fat, trans fats, sodium, or added sugar are limited. Juice is limited to once a day.
- ❑ The program promotes physical activity. The day's schedule has at least one hour of unstructured physical activity and at least thirty minutes of structured physical activity each day. Ideally, screen time is never used at the child care. Children go outside daily, even when it is rainy.
- ❑ To prevent possible lead exposure, the inside and outside of the building has no chipping paint if it was built before 1978.



- ❑ The program promotes good oral health by teaching kids about the dentist, providing dental information to parents, and supporting tooth brushing.
- ❑ Providers encourage and support mothers who breast feed their babies. A private and comfortable space is provided for mothers to nurse.
- ❑ The rooms are well-ventilated and don't feel stuffy. Providers do not use chemical air fresheners to cover-up bad smells but try to bring fresh air into the rooms by opening windows or using fans.
- ❑ Sound levels in the classroom create a peaceful and pleasant environment. Music is age-appropriate and kept to a low level.
- ❑ The program has a complete disaster plan that includes plans for many different situations. Staff conduct regular fire and earthquake drills. A three-day supply of food and water is stored on-site.
- ❑ Child care staff have a plan in place for helping new children adjust to the child care.
- ❑ Parents need to inform child care staff if their child has a special health or behavior need. Child care providers should have a written plan to address these special needs, including referrals for further assessment.
- ❑ The children in the program seem happy. The providers appear to enjoy working with the children and have a caring relationship with the children in their care.

