Choosing Quality Child Care

Learning to Grow
MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

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Choosing Child Care

The care that children receive during their early years shapes the way they learn, think, and behave for the rest of their lives. Whether they are cared for by their family members, professional child care providers, or family friends, children thrive when they are nurtured in a safe, healthy environment.

Choosing child care is one of the most important decisions you'll make as a parent. Research shows that participating in early care and education programs provides learning opportunities that build a foundation for a child's later success in school. To help you select quality child care for your infant, toddler, or preschooler, this booklet provides information on the different types of child care, how to make your selection, preparing your child, and working with your child's care provider. At the end of the booklet, there are also worksheets and checklists to assist you in your decision making.

What is quality child care?

The ways in which a child care provider interacts with young children indicate the quality of care they can give. Look for a care provider who:

- shows love and respect toward the children in his/her care
- exhibits a genuine enjoyment in interacting with young children
- provides children with learning experiences that match their ages and interests
- talks with and reads to children every day
- acknowledges children's accomplishments and positively encourages appropriate behavior through effective methods
- provides a safe environment in which children can freely explore and learn.

Why is quality child care important?

Children's brains develop rapidly during their first 5 years and early interactions with others have a strong influence on brain development. Much learning and growing takes place at this young age, such as:

- developing communication skills
- making discoveries about the world through play
- developing social skills and forming unique personalities
- learning self-control, perseverance, and problem-solving.

Terms

The **adult-child ratio** is the recommended number of adults available to care for a specific number of children in one setting. For example, a ratio of 1:3 means that in one child care setting, there should be 1 adult for every 3 children. The recommended ratio depends on the children's ages. Infants and young children need lots of one-to-one attention. Low adult-child ratios and small group sizes are important ingredients in quality care.

A **registered or licensed care provider** has received a certificate of registration or approval issued by the State authorizing the operation of a child care facility and meets certain minimum health, safety, and training standards, including first aid and CPR. For more information about registration or licensing requirements, call the child care licensing unit nearest you. (For phone numbers, see the "Resources" section of this booklet.)

An **exempt care provider** is not required to meet the State's registration or licensing requirements. Exempt care providers can care for up to 2 children who are not related to the provider, in addition to their own children or relatives with no more than 6 children total, if families receive DHS child care subsidy assistance.

An **accredited care provider** has met the highest quality care standards established by organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) for licensed facilities, and the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) for registered family care home providers. Not all licensed providers are accredited.

What are my child care options?

There are three basic types of child care settings:

A Child Care Center

A **child care center** is a place that is set up specifically to provide care for groups of children. Child care centers include infant/toddler centers, preschools, parent cooperatives, drop-in child care centers, and group child care homes. Licensed child care centers must meet State minimum standards for health, safety, staff qualifications, and adult-child ratio.

B Family Child Care Home

A **family child care home** is operated by a private care provider who cares for several children in his or her own home. **Registered** family child care providers must meet minimum standards for health, safety, and adult-child ratio. A maximum of 6 children can be cared for at one time in the home. Of the 6, no more than 2 children under the age of 18 months can be cared for at one time. If there is additional help, up to 4 children under 18 months can be cared for at one time.

C Family, Friend, or Neighbor Care

Family, friend, or neighbor care is provided by a relative (such as an aunty, uncle, grandma, or grandpa) or friend who is willing to care for your child in his or her home or yours. Family, friend, or neighbor care is an **exempt** form of child care.

Child Care Comparison Chart

A Child Care Center

Adult-Child Ratio & Maximum Group Size

Infant and Toddler Center

Ages of Children	Required Staff-Child Ratio	Maximum Group Size Allowed
6 wks to 12 mos	1:3	6
	1:4	8
12 mos to 24 mos	1:3	6
	1:4	8
	1:5	10
	1:4	12
18 mos to 36 mos	1:5	10
	1:6	12

Child Care Center

Ages of Children	Required Staff-Child Ratio	Maximum Group Size Allowed
2 years	1:8	16
3 years	1:12	24
4 - 5 years	1:16	32

Characteristics

- required to complete background checks, physical examination, unannounced visit by State monitor, and initial and 16 hours of on-going health and safety training every year
- provides opportunities for interaction with other children
- has staff with formal training in child development, early education, and Pediatric First Aid/child CPR. May require teachers to be certified (i.e., completed college courses)
- has more than one adult to care for the children
- has larger group sizes and may have multiple classes within a site
- adheres to a curriculum, policies, and daily schedule

B Family Child Care Home

Adult-Child Ratio & Maximum Group Size

Ages of Children	Required Adult-Child Ratio
Birth to 18 months	1:2
18 months to 6 years	1:6

A family child care provider can provide care for no more than six children at the same time as specified by their certificate of registration.

Characteristics

- required to complete background checks, physical examination, unannounced visit by State monitor, and initial and 16 hours of on-going health and safety training every year
- care provided in home setting
- may offer opportunities for interaction with children of other ages
- has staff with some formal training, including Pediatric First Aid/child CPR and must have another adult "on-call" for emergencies
- must have a health professional on-call to consult about health questions
- may be flexible with child care schedule
- may work alone or may have their family present during the day to assist with care

C Family, Friend, or Neighbor Care

Adult-Child Ratio & Maximum Group Size

Ages of Children	Recommended Adult-Child Ratio
Birth to 18 months	1:2
18 months to 13 years	1:6

An exempt care provider can care for up to 2 children who are not related to the provider, in addition to their own children or relatives, with no more than 6 children total, if families receive DHS child care subsidy assistance.

Characteristics

- care provided in home setting
- may be someone that your child already trusts and feels comfortable with
- may provide a sense of "extended family"
- may be flexible about schedules and caring for children who are ill
- may work alone

If receiving DHS child care subsidy assistance:

- required to complete background checks
- extended family and non-relatives are required to complete:
  - initial health and safety training;
  - 8 hours of health and safety training every year (e.g., Pediatric First Aid/child CPR)
  - health and safety monitoring inspection where care is provided, initially and every year

How do I choose?

Finding quality care that is convenient and affordable can be a challenge. Here are some tips on finding the care that is right for your family and your child. At the back of this booklet there are also worksheets you can copy and use to help make your decision.

Step 1: Consider your options.

Think about what type of child care would best match your child's temperament, interests, and needs. Some young children need more structure than others; some need more interaction with other children; some have special needs. Also, consider your family's circumstances, values, and any other relevant requirements. For example: What do you want for your child? How much can you afford? At what times do you need child care?, etc.

To help you decide, use the information in the *Child Care Comparison Chart* (p.3). Remember that the **quality of the learning and caring environment** is more important than the type of care setting. **Health and safety practices** are also important.

Step 2: Identify prospective care providers.

Once you know the type of care option(s) you're interested in, identify several care providers to contact. Here are some ways to get started:

- Ask friends and co-workers for recommendations of care providers that they may be familiar with.
- Contact PATCH, a child care resource and referral agency, for names of registered family care homes and licensed child care centers, as well as other useful information about childcare.
- Call the licensing unit of the State of Hawai'i Department of Human Services for information about whether a provider has a current license, has any licensing deficiencies, or has been reported for any child care complaints. (For contact information, see the "Resources" section of this booklet.)

Step 3: Interview care providers.

It's important that you feel good about your child's care provider. Schedule a phone or in-person interview with each care provider you are considering. During the interview:

- Ask questions about children's care, discipline, and activities, as well as the provider's experience in child care (see *Sample Interview Questions Worksheets*, p. 8).
- Look for answers that match or come close to your own feelings about raising children.
- Check to see whether the care provider's availability and costs match your needs.
- Ask for a tour of the facilities to observe children's activities and interactions.

Step 4: Visit, observe, and evaluate what you see.

Schedule time to observe the care provider or center while other children are there. Give yourself at least 30 minutes to find out whether you feel comfortable with the provider or center. Get permission to bring your child along with you. You want to be sure your child is happy with your choice. Ask yourself the questions in the *Observation Worksheet* (p. 11) and use the *Health and Safety Checklist* (p. 12.)

Step 5: Check references.

Ask providers for the names and phone numbers of at least two parents who are currently using or have previously used their services. Call these parents and ask them what they think about the provider and the care their children are receiving. Most parents are eager to share information with other parents. They may give you information and insights that you could not get any other way.

Step 6: Make a decision.

Review the information you collected from your interviews, observations, and reference checks. If you have questions that were not answered, call back and get more information. Trust your instincts when making your decision. If you're not comfortable with what you found so far, keep looking. It's okay to be selective – you are responsible for your child's health and safety.

Step 7: Follow up and stay involved.

After you choose a child care provider, follow up: observe and monitor the situation. Does your child seem happy? Are you comfortable with the provider's care? If you have any concerns, respectfully communicate them to the provider and work together to ensure that your child receives the best care possible. If you cannot resolve problems with the provider, it's okay to make a change. However, try not to make too many changes. Your child needs continuing, stable care at this young age.

How can I prepare my child?

When your child goes to a new care setting, both of you may feel "separation anxiety." Your child might be afraid of being in a new place and may cry or cling to you when you try to leave. You may feel guilty or unsure about leaving your child in someone else's care. These are normal feelings. Over time, as your child gets used to the new setting, drop-off time will be easier. To help:

- Talk to your child about what is going to happen before starting a new child care arrangement.
- Familiarize your child with the new setting by arranging a visit and spending some time there with your child.
- Let your child bring a favorite toy, comfort item, or a family photograph to help deal with being in a new place.
- Work with your child care provider to establish a drop-off routine. When you drop off your child, take a few minutes to greet the child care provider, help get your child involved in an activity, say, "Goodbye," and leave. A regular drop-off routine helps your child adjust more quickly and sets a positive tone for the day.

What are the best ways to work with my child's care provider?

Choosing the right care provider is just the start of making sure that your child receives essential nurturing and guidance. By working together, you and your care provider can help your child get off to a safe, healthy start and be ready to succeed in school!

Here are some ways to work together successfully:

- Treat each other with respect. Your provider is more than "just a babysitter." Many providers have years of experience and training.
- Make time to talk with your care provider. Share what's going on at home that may affect your child's behavior. Ask about your child's day in the care setting.
- Discuss the concerns you or your provider may have when they happen, but not in front of your child. Find ways to work together to address these concerns.
- Respect your care provider's rules about what to do when your child is sick. To protect the health of other children in the provider's care, you may be asked to keep your child at home.
- Follow rules about what to bring (or not bring) to the child care setting.
- Have a back-up plan for child care in case your provider or your child is sick.
- Be involved. Volunteer to help out whenever possible.
- Pick up your child on time at the end of the day. If you are running late, call ahead of time. Remember, your provider has other commitments to attend to just as you do.
- Pay your care provider on time. Your provider relies on your payment just as you rely on your paycheck.

Referral Worksheet

Photocopy as needed and use to record information to help you with your child care choice.

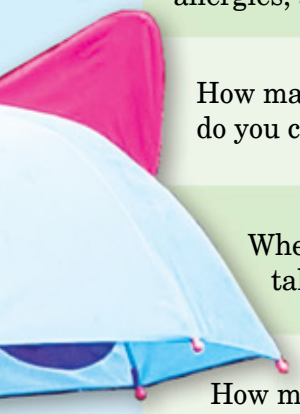
Provider's Name, Address & Phone Number	Current License (Yes/No)	Licensing Deficiencies (Yes/No)	Reported Child Care Complaints (Yes/No)	Parent References & Phone Numbers	Comments from Parent References

Sample Interview Questions Worksheet

Select the questions that best address your concerns and discuss them during your interviews with child care providers you are considering.

Provider's Name _____

Level of Quality	Comments/Notes
How long have you been working with children?	
What kind of education or training do you have in child development and care?	
What do you like best about children?	
Tell me what a typical day looks like.	
Is there an enclosed yard or playground where the children can play outside?	
How do you discipline children (for example, when a child hits or bites another child)?	
How do you handle emergencies?	
What do you do if a child gets sick or hurt?	



How do you handle a child's special medical needs, e.g. allergies, asthma, medications?	
How many children do you care for?	
When do the children take naps?	
How many adults are there per child?	
For relative, friend, or family care home providers: Do you have any pets?	
For relative, friend, or family care home providers: Do you smoke?	
For relative, friend, or family care providers: Who else has regular access to the home?	
How do you let parents know about the child's day?	
Other questions:	

Availability	Comments/Notes
What hours are you available for full- or part-time care?	
What ages do you accept?	
Do you have any openings? If not, is there a waiting list?	
Other questions:	

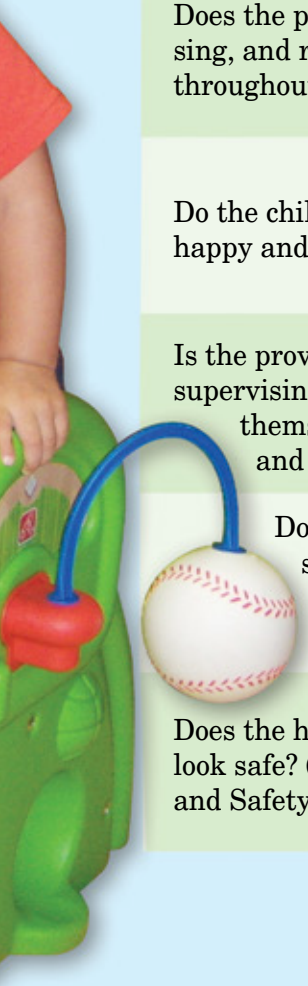
Cost	Comments/Notes
What are your fees?	
Are fees different for full- or part-time care?	
Are there different fees for children of different ages?	
Do fees include breakfast and/or lunch? How many snacks are provided each day?	
When are fees due?	
Is there still a charge when a child is sick or on vacation?	
Are there extra fees—late pick-up, early drop-off, supplies?	
Other questions:	

Observation Worksheet

Photocopy as needed.

Provider's Name _____

Observation	Comments/Notes
Does the provider play with the children?	
Does the provider talk, sing, and read with children throughout the day?	
Do the children seem happy and confident?	
Is the provider actively supervising by positioning themselves within sight and sound of the children?	
Does the provider set limits that are reasonable for the age of the child?	
Does the home or center look safe? (Use Health and Safety Checklist)	



Health and Safety Checklist	Yes	No	Comments/Notes
Are the electrical outlets covered?			
Are there safety latches on cabinets and drawers? Are they high or difficult enough so that young children cannot open them?			
Are there safety gates at the top and bottom of stairways?			
Are there smoke detectors? Fire extinguishers?			
Does the provider have a first aid kit?			
Does the provider have training in Pediatric First Aid and child CPR?			
Is there an evacuation plan posted and practiced in the event of an emergency?			
Is there an emergency contact card for each child?			
Are emergency numbers clearly posted?			
Does the caregiver wash hands after diapering, after using the toilet, and before preparing meals and snacks?			
Is food prepared and stored in a safe manner?			
Is a weekly menu available? (Helpful to spot food allergies.)			
Does the provider use car seats for transporting children?			
Is there a procedure for ensuring children's safety on outings?			
Are outside play areas enclosed?			
Are medicines and dangerous items (e.g., knives, firearms, small or sharp objects) or poisonous materials (e.g., cleaners, chemicals) kept in locked cabinets or out of children's reach?			
Other:			

Resources

Child Care Subsidies

Families who meet income eligibility requirements can receive a subsidy (financial aid) from the Department of Human Services (DHS) to help with child care costs.

Licensing Units, Department of Human Services, State of Hawai‘i

The Department of Human Services (DHS) regulates licensed and registered child care homes and facilities and monitors exempt providers. DHS also monitors the current licensure or registration status, deficiencies in meeting the requirements for licensure or registration, and reports of child care complaints for licensed or registered providers. To check on licensed child care providers, contact the licensing unit nearest you. The following is a list of the child care licensing units statewide:

Child Care Licensing Unit 1
Pohulani Elderly Housing Project
677 Queen Street, Room 400A
Honolulu, HI 96813
Phone: (808) 587-5266

Child Care Licensing Unit 2
Waipahu Civic Center
94-275 Mokuola Street, Room 203
Waipahu, HI 96797
Phone: (808) 675-0470

Central Hilo Unit
1990 Kino‘ole Street, Suite 109
Hilo, HI 96720
Phone: (808) 981-7290

North Kona 2 Unit
Kona Center
75-5722 Hanama Place, Room 1105
Kailua-Kona, HI 96740
Phone: (808) 327-4755

Maui Central Unit
(includes Lāna‘i and Moloka‘i)
Waiehu Beach Center
270 Waiehu Beach Road, Suite 107
Wailuku, HI 96793
Phone: (808) 243-5866

Kauai South Unit
3059 Umi Street, Suite 104
Līhu‘e, HI 96766
Phone: (808) 241-3679

The Parent Line

The Parent Line is a free statewide confidential telephone line which offers support and information to parents and other caregivers.

Phone: (808) 526-1222 (O‘ahu)
1-800-816-1222 (toll free from neighbor islands)

Web: www.theparentline.org

PATCH (People Attentive to Children)

PATCH is Hawai‘i’s child care resource and referral agency. PATCH’s mission is to support and improve the quality and availability of care for the young people of Hawai‘i.

Phone: (808) 839-1988 (O‘ahu)
(808) 246-0622 (Kaua‘i)
(808) 322-3500 (West Hawai‘i)
(808) 961-3169 (East Hawai‘i)
(808) 242-9232 (Maui County)

Exempt providers needing assistance with Child Care Subsidy forms, please contact (808) 550-3859 or email ccs@patch-hi.org

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