

# LOOK FOR THE COLORADO SHINES RATING!



## QUALITY CARE MATTERS

The early years of life are critical to a child's learning and development. Quality early learning programs, like child care and preschool, help children start early and start strong on the path to life-long success.

Children who attend quality early learning programs are more likely to do well in school, get along with others, and are less likely to drop out of school later in life.

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**ONE IN FOUR**  
CHILDREN IN COLORADO  
STARTS KINDERGARTEN  
**UNPREPARED TO KEEP PACE**  
WITH THEIR CLASSMATES.

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## GET INVOLVED IN YOUR CHILD'S LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

- **Play, read, sing and talk with your child.** Get practical tips at [EarlyLearningCO.org](http://EarlyLearningCO.org).
- **Make sure that other adults are supporting your child, too.** Search for quality early learning programs at [ColoradoShines.com](http://ColoradoShines.com).
- **Learn more about your child care options.** Call a local Child Care Resource & Referral agency at 1-877-338-2273.



**COLORADO SHINES**  
START EARLY  
START STRONG  
QUALITY EARLY LEARNING

**GIVE YOUR CHILD A STRONG START WITH COLORADO SHINES!**

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A GUIDE TO FINDING QUALITY CHILD CARE



**COLORADO SHINES**  
START EARLY  
START STRONG  
QUALITY EARLY LEARNING



**COLORADO**  
Department of Human Services



**COLORADO**  
Department of Education

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[WWW.COLORADOSHINES.COM](http://WWW.COLORADOSHINES.COM)

844-447-4441

# THE COLORADO SHINES RATING

There are many things families consider when looking for child care. The quality of care is important because the early years of a child's life are critical for a child's learning and development. The early years prepare children for kindergarten and success at school.

Colorado Shines is the state's system that rates the quality of Colorado's early childhood programs. It also provides families a free, online search tool to find high-quality early learning programs in their communities. Visit [coloradoshines.com](http://coloradoshines.com) to learn more.



Colorado Shines offers a reliable rating that families can trust. Just by participating in Colorado Shines, early learning programs are showing their commitment to quality and continuous improvement. All programs are rated on a scale of quality Levels 1 through 5.

## **LEVEL 1:**

The program is licensed by the State of Colorado and meets basic health and safety standards.

## **LEVEL 2:**

The program meets the requirements of Level 1 and is taking specific steps to improve its quality.

## **LEVEL 3-5:**

The program has completed an intensive process to demonstrate quality in the following areas:

- Support for children's health and safety
- Well-trained and effective staff
- Supportive learning environment that teaches children new skills
- Helping families be active in their child's learning
- Strong leadership and business practices

## **WHAT QUALITY LOOKS LIKE**

No two early learning programs look alike. Some of the characteristics that set quality programs apart include:

- You and your child are welcomed in to the classroom every day
- Staff listen to your child and help them to express how they feel and what they need
- Your child is given opportunities for long periods of play and experimentation with a variety of materials to support their development
- You are informed of your child's development and are provided with resources to promote their health, nutrition and social-emotional development
- You are invited to participate in the classroom and to collaborate with staff to support your child
- The program maintains a low teacher to child ratio and may designate a primary caregiver for your child

## **HOW TO FIND QUALITY EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS IN YOUR COMMUNITY**

- Think about the kind of care you need (a center, home-based care, Head Start, etc.)
- Search for a quality child care program and see if you qualify for financial support at [ColoradoShines.com](http://ColoradoShines.com)
- Visit a few programs and ask questions

## **TOP 5 QUESTIONS TO ASK**

1. Is your program licensed by the State of Colorado and rated by Colorado Shines?
2. How will my child spend his/her day? What is a typical day like for children here?
3. What training have you and your staff had?
4. What kind of daily communication will I receive?
5. How can I participate?