

TIP SHEET FOR PARENTS : FINDING THE RIGHT CARE

Each type of care has benefits and drawbacks. As you think about your child and your family's needs, you might want to consider the pros and cons of various types of care.

Child Care Centers

A nonresidential setting where the children are often grouped by age. The staff to child ratios vary by the age of the children in the classroom. Some centers serve children from infancy through school-age, while others are oriented toward one particular age group.

Advantages

- Activities are planned specifically for your child's age group.
- Might be able to serve families with children of different ages.
- Children are usually grouped with other children their own age.
- Back-up systems for sick staff are built in.
- Caregivers usually work an eight-hour day, as opposed to providing care from opening to closing.
- In most centers, equipment and space is used solely for child care.

Disadvantages

- Teachers have shifts which can be disruptive for some children and adults.
- Teacher turnover can be high.
- Spread of children's illnesses might be a problem. The spread of sickness can be greatly reduced by the hygiene practices put in place by the center.
- Larger group sizes may not suit your child's personality.
- Hours may not be convenient for your work schedule.
- Infant and Toddler care is scarce and may have long waiting lists.

Family Child Care Homes

Care in another person's home. Colorado requires all individuals who care for children from more than one family at a time, other than their own, to be licensed. The number of children a licensed home provider can care for varies depending on their type of license.

Advantages

- Can serve families with children of different ages.
- Tends to be less expensive than in-home or child care centers.
- Provides a home-like environment, making the child's transition from the child's own home to the child care home easier (for some children).
- One caregiver usually spends the whole day with the child.
- Mixed age groups may enhance the nurturing skills in older children, and provide role modeling for younger children.
- The hours of care may be more flexible to accommodate the parent's work schedule.
- It's more likely to be found in your neighborhood.

Disadvantages

- There may be no back-up available for the caregiver in the event of an emergency or his/her sickness.
- Mixed age groups may not suit your child's personality.
- Small group size may not suit your child's personality.
- Hours of care may be long for one caregiver.
- There is little, if any, supervision of the provider.

Child Care in your home

Child care in your home with the caregiver either living with your family or coming in on a regular basis.

Advantages

- Can include all of the children in the family regardless of their ages.
- It can be used for both healthy and ill children.
- Reduces the risk of exposure to other children's illnesses.
- Can be cost effective for multiple children.
- The child remains in his or her own environment, which may be less stressful for both the parent and the child.
- Can provide consistency of the provider throughout the day with no changing shifts.
- Can offer flexibility, depending on the arrangement made between the caregiver and parents.

Disadvantages

- Costly. It can be the most expensive type of care.
- Not regulated and no supervision of caregiver, beyond what family puts in place.
- It can be difficult to locate appropriate caregivers. Screening applicants takes time and know-how.
- Hours may be long for one caregiver.
- Parent assumes responsibilities of being an employer with legal and other requirements.
- Turnover can be disruptive and sometimes unexpected.

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