

QUALITY CHECKLIST

For Child Care



DIVISION OF
Early Learning

LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE.

EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS IN FLORIDA

Child Care Resource and Referral

The Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Program is a statewide program that helps families:

- Identify and select quality early learning programs.
- Connect to local community agencies and resources.
- Engage in their children’s education and learning.
- Locate financial resource options.

School Readiness Program

The School Readiness Program (SR) provides subsidies for child care services and early childhood education for children of low-income families; children at risk of abuse and neglect; and children with disabilities. The program supports children in the development of skills for success in school and provides parents with information and resources on child development. Services vary based on individual needs and range from early education and care to after-school and school-age care in some instances.

Voluntary Prekindergarten Program

The Voluntary Prekindergarten Program (VPK) is a state program designed to prepare children in Florida for kindergarten and build the foundation for their educational success. VPK gives each child an opportunity to perform better in school and throughout life with quality programs that offer high literacy standards, accountability, age-appropriate curricula, substantial instruction periods, managed class sizes and qualified instructors. Parents can enroll their child in the state’s VPK program if their child is 4 years old on or before September 1 of the current school year. If the child’s birthday is between February 2 and September 1, parents may choose to wait and enroll their child the following year at age 5.

Eligible children can participate in one of three VPK program options:

- VPK School-Year Program - 540 instructional hours
- VPK Summer Program - 300 instructional hours
- VPK Specialized Instructional Services (SIS) Program

Head Start and Early Head Start

The Head Start and Early Head Start (HS/EHS) Programs provide comprehensive education, health, nutrition and parent engagement services to low-income families and their children ages birth through 5. HS/EHS provides child care and education for children in a classroom setting.

OBSERVATION TIPS

Look and Listen

You learn a great deal by watching and listening to what is happening in a child care setting. Children should be happy and engaged in age-appropriate activities. Teachers should be kind, nurturing and responsive to all children in their care. Listen to the words teachers use when talking to the children. Children need to hear a wide variety of words to promote their language development.

Ask Questions

If you have any questions or concerns, write them down as they occur to you. Ask for a time to discuss them with the director or teacher. The directors and teachers should be willing to answer your questions and address any concerns you may have.

Pay Attention to Your Instincts

Take note of any uneasy feelings you may have during your visit. You know your child best. If possible, take your child with you and see how they react to the new space and people. Children respond in their own unique ways to changes in their routines. Be careful not to rule out other factors that could influence your child's reaction such as being hungry or tired. Trust your instincts and your ability to make wise decisions for your child. You want to feel good about your child spending many hours each day in a program or preschool.

Consider Costs

Take into consideration any additional fees. Carefully weigh the pros and cons of each child care program, director and teacher you visit. Decide which early learning program meets the greatest number of your priorities at a rate you can afford. Keep in mind that the highest cost for child care does not guarantee the best quality. Likewise, the least expensive rates do not necessarily suggest poor quality.

Make an Informed Decision

Your first concern is your child's safety, health and welfare. Every facility will have positive features, but only you can decide what is most important. Now that you have done your homework and some careful thinking, you are ready to make your choice. Remember, selecting and placing your child in an early learning program is just the beginning. Talk to your child's teacher often and make scheduled and unannounced visits to ensure your child is happy and your decision was the right one.

Types of Care

Family Child Care Homes

Family child care takes place in a person’s home for children from unrelated families. Group size may vary according to preferences of the family child care provider; however, the provider must maintain required ratios at all times. Ages of children may often be mixed, although some providers serve only a specific age group (such as infants, toddlers or preschoolers). Different requirements apply to different programs, with some family child care homes being licensed and some registered.

Child Care Centers

Early learning centers may be licensed or license-exempt and are usually located in spaces adapted for early learning purposes. These include stand-alone centers and those located in businesses, homes, apartment complexes, public schools, universities, hospitals and faith-based organizations. Prekindergarten programs (both school-based and non-school-based), Head Start programs, on-site employee early learning centers and faith-based centers are some of the types of child care centers available.

School-Age Program

A school-age program is a licensed or license-exempt program that serves school-age children. A school-age child is one who is at least 5 years old by September 1, and who is attending kindergarten or a higher grade level. The setting for a school-age program may be a public or private school, private center, family child care home, faith-based center or community/recreation program. School-age programs may be open before and/or after school as well as full days during teacher planning days and spring, winter and summer breaks.

Select child care facilities you plan to visit and write their information here.	
Child Care 1	
Child Care 2	
Child Care 3	

Child Care Information

Questions to Ask/ Things to Consider	Child Care 1	Child Care 2	Child Care 3
How far is it from home/work?			
Do the hours of operation and holiday schedule accommodate your work schedule?			
What is the rate or cost of care? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infants • Toddlers • Preschool • School-age 			
Are there discounts or priority for siblings?			
Are there any additional fees and how often are they due? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supplies/materials • Meals/snacks • Registration/application • Early drop-off/late pick-up • Field trips/special activities • Late payment • Other fees 			
What are the drop-off and pick-up times?			
Does the provider charge when a child is out sick or on vacation?			
Does the provider offer safe and reliable transportation?			
Are there staff with specialized training for children with a variety of special needs?			
Does the provider participate in the School Readiness (SR) Program?			
Does the provider participate in the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Program?			
Does the provider offer Head Start or Early Head Start?			

Health and Safety

Questions to Ask/ Things to Consider	Child Care 1	Child Care 2	Child Care 3
Is the provider licensed or accredited?			
Can the provider supply their state inspection history?			
Does the provider have completed background checks on all staff?			
Is the setting/classroom clean and welcoming?			
Are emergency and security plans in place?			
How are children accounted for throughout the day?			
Is the front entry always locked and staffed for security?			
Is there a safe, fenced outdoor area?			
Do children 2 years old and younger play separately from the older children?			
What is the provider's policy for administering and storing medications?			
Are healthy and nutritious snacks/meals provided?			
How often does diapering/toileting occur?			
Is handwashing done frequently?			
Do the children have an opportunity to play outside each day?			
Is there a variety of outside equipment/toys available and appropriate for various ages?			
Is there shade available outside where the children play?			
Are fire extinguishers and smoke detectors on site and is a fire drill plan available?			

Did you know?

The Florida Department of Children and Families and local licensing agencies monitor and inspect licensed child care programs and license-exempt School Readiness (SR) programs to ensure compliance with health and safety, background screening and training requirements and state and federal laws.

You can find child care inspection reports and other valuable resources on their website at <https://caressearch.myflfamilies.com/PublicSearch>.

Do you know your early learning coalition?

The Division of Early Learning partners with 30 early learning coalitions (ELCs) and the Redlands Christian Migrant Association (RCMA) to provide these child care options as part of the SR program. The ELCs and RCMA can provide significant support as you make your decision. Find your local coalition at www.fldoe.org/schools/early-learning/directory.

Well-Trained Staff			
Questions to Ask/Things to Consider	Child Care 1	Child Care 2	Child Care 3
How long have the teachers and director worked for the provider?			
How is teacher turnover managed?			
How are teacher absences managed?			
Are teachers or the director trained to administer developmental screenings and identify children who may need additional services?			
Does the provider participate in a local quality rating and improvement system or has there been a program assessment completed recently?			
Does the provider have a Gold Seal designation?			

QRIS

A Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is designed to assess and improve the quality of early learning programs. Florida does not have a statewide QRIS program; however, some counties have implemented a local QRIS. Check with your local early learning coalition to see if they have a QRIS and what information they can give you about your potential provider.

Program Assessment

Child care centers in Florida participating in the SR and VPK programs receive an assessment using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) tool. CLASS® is an observation-based program assessment that measures the quality of interactions between teachers and children. CLASS® is recognized internationally for capturing elements within a classroom that improve child outcomes including increased math achievement, stronger vocabulary and reading outcomes and better classroom behavior. Providers are assessed annually and must achieve a minimum score to be eligible to offer an SR or VPK program. If a provider participates in either program, ask about their CLASS® score.



Environments for Learning			
Questions to Ask/Things to Consider	Child Care 1	Child Care 2	Child Care 3
Is there a primary teacher for each age group?			
What are the ratios? <i>(ex. one adult for four infants).</i>			
Are toys, books and furniture clean and in good shape?			
Is the classroom arranged in a way that toys and materials are accessible to children?			
Are the children engaged in activities?			
Do teachers read daily to children and are books provided for children to use independently?			
Are songs, finger plays and interactive nursery rhymes part of daily routines?			
Is there space for active and quiet play?			
How does the child care program use technology to support learning? How often is technology used?			

What are Positive Teacher-Child Relationships?

In early childhood settings, each interaction between a teacher and child is an opportunity to develop positive relationships.

To build positive relationships, teachers should:

- Engage in one-on-one interactions with children.
- Get on the child’s level for face-to-face interactions.
- Use a pleasant, calm voice and simple language.
- Provide warm, responsive physical contact.
- Follow the child’s lead and interest during play.
- Help children understand classroom expectations.
- Redirect children when they engage in challenging behavior.
- Listen and encourage listening.
- Acknowledge children for their accomplishments and effort.



Family Engagement			
Questions to Ask/Things to Consider	Child Care 1	Child Care 2	Child Care 3
Can parents stop by anytime?			
Are parents encouraged to volunteer or participate in activities?			
Is there a daily method of communication between the teachers and parents?			
Is there a weekly schedule posted in a visible location?			
Is your initial reaction upon entering the child care program a positive one?			

Family engagement is important because it:

- Supports children’s kindergarten readiness skills.
- Increases children’s motivation and reduces challenging behavior.
- Improves children’s development with impulse control, attention span, memory and planning skills.
- Supports the healthy development of all children.

How can families get involved?

- Communicate with the director or teacher on a regular basis.
- Create a positive learning environment at home.
- Read to your child daily.
- Participate in community events for families.
- Volunteer at the child care center or in a classroom.
- Participate in family meetings, parent teacher conferences and parenting classes.
- Join the child care center's advisory board or groups that help make decisions for the child care facility.



Contact Us

For more information, please contact your local early learning coalition. The CCR&R State Network can help connect you with your coalition.



Child Care Resource and Referral

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[Locate Your Early Learning Coalition](#)