

Child care in Ontario

Child care should be an enriching and satisfying experience for both you and your child.

As a parent, you want to be confident that your child is in a healthy, safe and happy environment. You also want the best child care environment to meet your child's needs as he or she grows and learns.

The best way to be sure is to be informed about your child's care.

Talk to your child about their day in care. If you have concerns or questions, talk to your child's caregiver. A good caregiver or child care centre will always welcome a parent's questions and will encourage them to be involved in their child's care. If you are in a child care centre, you may also want to read the centre's program statement explaining its goals and how it meets them every day.

You can also enhance your child's experience in child care by supporting the important relationship between caregiver and child. Keep your child's caregivers informed of any special problems or concerns you have about your child. For example, tell them if your child had a bad night, seems to be becoming ill or is upset about something.



Who should I talk to if I have concerns about my child's care?

Discuss your concerns with your child's caregiver or the operator of the program or agency.

If you feel your concerns are not being met or if the situation does not improve, you may want to share your concerns with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services regional office in your area. You can find the one closest to you by calling the Ministry toll-free at 1-866-821-7770 (TTY: 1-800-387-5559). You can also visit the ministry website at www.children.gov.on.ca.

The ministry does not have legal authority over fees, hours of operation and enrolment practices. If you have concerns about these areas you should discuss them with the operator of the program.

Where can I find more information on child care in Ontario?

You can visit the Ministry of Children and Youth website at www.children.gov.on.ca for more information including child care options, how to introduce your child to child care, and how parents and caregivers can work together.

You may also want to review the *Day Nurseries Act* which is available online at www.e-laws.gov.on.ca.

You can buy a copy through Publications Ontario by calling 1-800-668-9938.

Where can I get assistance to pay for child care?

You may qualify for child care fee assistance to make your child care more affordable. Ask the centre or agency for local contact information on child care fee subsidies.



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Types of child care in Ontario

In Ontario, there are two types of child care — informal care and licensed child care.

Informal child care may be provided by relatives, friends, neighbours or nannies. This type is not regulated by law.

Licensed child care is regulated by law to meet specific standards of care. It is also inspected and monitored by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to help provide a healthy and safe environment for children.

Licensed child care also provides programs to support children's early learning and healthy development so they can enter school ready to learn. It includes child care centres, nursery schools, extended day care and before and after school programs. It can be in schools, churches, community, public and commercial buildings. It can also be in private homes through a licensed private-home care agency. The agency supports and monitors caregivers who provide care in their own homes for up to five children younger than 10 years old.

What is required for a licence?

Ontario's *Day Nurseries Act* sets out the requirements for a child care program licence. These regulations are to protect the health, safety and well-being of children. Examples include standards for:

- Learning programs appropriate to specific age groups
- Good nutrition including meals and snacks
- Allowable sizes for groups of children, by age
- Adequate indoor play space and natural light
- Hygiene and cleanliness including space for washing and bathroom areas
- Emergency and safety procedures including monthly fire drills
- Safety standards for indoor and playground equipment, toys and furniture
- Staff qualifications
- Behaviour management policies
- Health and medical records.

Does the ministry monitor the program?

Ministry of Children and Youth Services staff monitor licensed child care facilities and inspect them at least once a year. They also inspect a selection of licensed private-home child care settings every year. In addition, ministry staff also do unannounced inspections.

Either a *regular* or a *provisional* child care licence is issued by the ministry after an inspection.

The type of licence depends on whether the licensing requirements were met at the time of inspection. The licence and any conditions must be posted so that parents and visitors can see them.



What is a regular licence?

A regular licence means all licensing requirements were met when last inspected. Most centres will have a regular licence.

What is a provisional licence?

A provisional licence means your child care program did not meet all the licensing requirements when last inspected by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services.

The reasons for the provisional licence must be posted beside the licence. Ask your child care operator or agency to explain any terms or conditions on the licence.

A provisional licence gives the centre or agency a time limit to meet the licensing requirements. It will be given a regular licence if all the requirements are met on a follow-up ministry inspection.

Should I be concerned about a provisional licence?

A provisional licence *does not* mean that children are in an unsafe place or that the centre or private-home child care is about to close. If the inspection found a threat to a child's health or safety, the ministry would take immediate action to provide for the well-being of children in care.

It is rare that a centre or agency with a provisional licence does not meet requirements before the follow-up inspection. However, the ministry may refuse to renew or revoke a licence if a centre or agency continues to fail to meet the licensing requirements.