



Steuben and Schuyler's most trusted child care resource.

Parent Newsletter

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What Type of Child Care Fits?

Listed below are brief descriptions of common types of child day care programs in New York State. Each program is regulated by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services.

Day Care Centers - provide care for more than six children at a time, not in a personal residence.

Small Day Care Centers - provide care for up to six children, not in a personal residence.

Family Day Care Homes - provide care for three to six children at a time in a residence; may add one or two school-age children. The maximum allowable number of children will depend on whether or not and how many infants are in care.

Group Family Day Care Homes - provide care for seven to twelve children at a time in a residence; may add one to four school-age children. The maximum allowable number of children will depend on whether or not and how many infants are in care. Two caregivers must be present when more than six children, none of whom are school age, are in care.

School-Age Child Care Programs - provide care for more than six children from kindergarten through age twelve. Care for children during non-school hours; also may provide care during school vacation periods and holidays.

**Each of the programs listed above can serve children ages six weeks through twelve years and operate for more than three hours a day.*

The Steps to Finding Quality Care

Approach your child care search as you would a job hunt. Be thorough, do your homework, and start your quest early – six months before you'll need it isn't too soon, especially if you have an infant or live in a rural area where care is sparse.

Once you find a promising day care center or home day care, you'll need to take a few steps to make sure it's one you want to stick with.

First, decide what you want.

Are you looking for day care near work? Or would one closer to your home be more convenient? Do you want your child around larger groups, as he would be in a center, or just a few (more likely in a home day care)?

Second, do your research.

Ask around to find the most reputable day cares. Friends and family can help get the word out for you, and personal references are the best kind. Utilize community resources. Child Care Aware® of Steuben of Schuyler can refer you to licensed and registered care in your area. Call them at 607-776-2126.

Third, visit and interview.

You can ask a few preliminary questions over the phone, but you won't really get a sense of what a facility is like until you go there and meet the provider. Ask day care center directors and home day care providers about everything from hours, fees, policies, and vacation schedules. Pay attention to the caregiver-child ratios, and how many children are in care.

Provider Q & A Guide

Here's a list of some questions to ask while interviewing a potential childcare provider.

Are you certified/ licensed/registered? Providers caring for more than two children, not from the same family, are required to be licensed. A regulated provider has had a background check and met certain standards for safety and adult-to-child ratios.

What is the adult-to-child ratio? A ratio that's better than the state requirement — meaning fewer children per adult — is a good thing. It means the providers aren't overworked and the rooms aren't overrun.

What is your policy regarding sick children? You'll need to know when to get backup care for your child. You'll also want reassurance that all parents will be asked to keep their feverish kids at home to minimize contagious outbreaks.

Do I have to pay for days when my child is absent due to sickness or vacation? Usually, the answer is yes, but each provider can set their own policy, so it does no harm to make sure. Some will give you a break if your child has an extended illness.

Can I make unannounced visits to see/observe my child? Be cautious of any provider who doesn't allow you to come and go during regular hours or that has a strict visiting schedule. You should always feel welcome to observe your child during the day. As per regulation you are allowed to visit at any time.

What are the cleaning and sanitizing practices? How often are carpets and toys cleaned? Stomach viruses can live in carpets for up to 14 days. Make sure the facility places a high priority on cleanliness.

How much emphasis is placed on education vs. unstructured play time? Will your child spend the entire day in the corner playing with toys or will he be engaged with learning activities through play and story time? Learning activities should be offered at all times.

Quick Tip #1: While interviewing a provider, you want to make sure that they get to know you as well. It's a great idea to write out a child summary, if the provider doesn't provide one with their standard paperwork. The child summary should include things specific to your child, their favorite foods, fears, any medical conditions, and their favorite activities. This can be a great written reference for the provider as they start watching your child(ren).

Quick Tip #2: Communication is important. Help your provider out by being open and courteous when having a conversation. In the course of finding a provider, if you change your mind on your first choice or if your childcare plans change, make sure to give a quick courtesy call to the individuals you visited to let them know so they will be able to open up the spot they were reserving for you. This will allow them to free up the spot for another child who may need care.



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