



Quality Child Care Matters

If you are looking for child care, you may already have a good idea of what you want, a place that is safe, happy, and loving...where children can learn and have fun. You also need child care to meet your needs, a location that is convenient, care available that matches your schedule, and that is affordable.

Finding child care that has the quality and convenience you want, at a reasonable cost, can be a challenge. It is often difficult to find a perfect situation, yet it is possible to find a very good situation.

We know that providers and teachers who have training and education provide higher quality care through adult child interactions, offering opportunities for children to grow and learn in a developmentally appropriate way, and they recognize the importance of the first five years of a child's life. By the time children reach the age of five, the brain is 90 percent developed, making early childhood the most critical period for brain development. Idaho STARS offers opportunities for child care providers and program directors to attend training, or apply for a scholarship to a college or university to earn a degree in Early Childhood or a Child Development Accreditation Certification.

When looking for child care, be sure to ask the provider if she (or he) is participating in the Idaho STARS program.

Quality Child Care Checklist

Place a check in the box if the program meets your expectations.

Fill in the name of each program below and use the corresponding column of checkboxes to help you remember each visit.

Option 1: _____

Option 2: _____

Option 3: _____



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Supervision

Will my child be supervised?

		Are children watched at all times, including when they are sleeping?
		Are adults warm and welcoming? Do they pay attention to each child?
		Are clear and simple safety rules established with the children?
		Do adults focus on positive guidance and redirect behavior rather than using negative punishments?
		Are there enough staff-members to supervise all children? <i>See the recommended guidelines for adult-to-child ratios at the end of this document.</i>

Training

Have the adults been trained to care for children?

For a child care center (a program offering care in a community center, place of worship or other facilities):

		Does the child care program participate in the Idaho STARS program?
		Does the child care program have a Star Rating?
		Does the director have a degree and some experience in caring for children?
		Do the teachers have a credential or an early childhood-related degree and experience in caring for children?
		Are all adults continuing to receive early childhood-related training or education?
		Do the teaching staff and director participate in the Idaho STARS professional development system?

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For family child care (care offered in the caregiver's home):

			Has the provider had specific training on children's development and experience caring for children?
			Is the provider continuing to receive early childhood-related training or education?

For child care center AND family child care home:

			Is there always someone present who has current CPR and first aid training?
			Is there always someone present who has current SIDS and Shake n Baby Syndrome training?
			Have the adults received training specific to my child's age and needs?
			Are the adults willing to seek out such training?
			Have the adults been trained on child abuse prevention?
			Are the adults willing to seek out such training?

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Learning

Will my child be able to grow and learn?

		Are there specific areas for different kinds of play (blocks, puzzles, art, dress-up etc.)?
		Is the play space organized and are toys and materials easy to reach and use?
		Are toys age-appropriate?
		Are some toys and materials available at all times and are some rotated?
		Are there daily or weekly activity plans available? Have the adults planned experiences for my child to enjoy?
		Do adults hold children infants when feeding?
		Do adults interact with infants, or are they left in a pack n play or car seat for much of their awake time?
		Will my child be engaged in conversations with adults throughout the day which are appropriate to his/her age?
		Will my child be asked questions, when appropriate, and encouraged to speak and communicate?
		Will my child be read to at least twice a day and encouraged to read or explore books on his or her own?

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Health and Safety

Is this a safe and healthy place for my child?

		Do adults and children wash their hands (after using the bathroom, changing diapers, eating, coming in from outside, etc.)?
		Are diaper changing surfaces cleaned and disinfected after each use?
		Do all of the children enrolled have the required immunizations?
		Are medicines labeled and out of children's reach?
		Is there a system in place to ensure children are given the correct medication?
		Are cleaning supplies and other poisonous materials locked up, out of children's reach?
		Is there a plan to follow if a child is injured, sick or lost?
		Are first aid kits readily available?
		Is there a plan for responding to disasters (fire, flood etc.)?
		Is the outdoor play area a safe place for children to play?
		Do the children go outside every day unless the weather doesn't support outdoor time?
		Is the equipment the right size and type for the age of the children who use it?
		In center-based programs, is the playground area surrounded by a fence at least four feet tall?
		Is the equipment placed on mulch, sand or rubber matting?
		Is the equipment in good condition?
		Is the number of children in each group limited? <i>Smaller group size has been shown to be an important indicator of quality.</i>
		What is the ratio (number of adults per number of children) on the playground? Do the adults interact with children and facilitate their play? <i>Adults who stand around and visit are not engaging children nor focused on the activity and interactions of the children in the care.</i>



Management

Is the program well-managed?

			Is the program's license in good standing with the state or local agencies who oversee licenses?
			Are parents and/or staff asked to evaluate the program?
			How many training hours does the program staff take each year? <i>Receiving ongoing training has been found to be an important step in providing excellent care.</i>
			Is the program accredited by a national organization? <i>Accreditation means that this child care/early education program has been recognized by a leading national organization as a provider of excellent care.</i>

Communication

Does the program work closely with parents?

			Will I be welcome any time my child is in care?
			Is parents' feedback sought and used in making program improvements?
			Will I be given a copy of the program's policies?
			Will I be given a contract signed by the caregiver?
			Are annual conferences held with parents?

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Daycare Centers
Staff:Child Ratio and Maximum Group Size
Based on Age of Youngest Child in Attendance

Ages and Counts Based on Age of Youngest Child	Staff:Child Ratio	Maximum Group Size
A child or children birth to two (2) years of age	1:6 or 2:12	12
All Children at least two (2) years of age	1:8 or 2:16	16
All children at least three years of age	1:10 or 2:20	20
All children at least four years of age 1:12	1:12 or 2:24	24
All children at least five years of age	1:18 or 2:36	36

Group Daycare Facilities & Family Daycare Homes (voluntarily licensed)
Staff:Child Ratio and Maximum Group Size
Based on Age of Youngest Child in Attendance

Ages and Counts Based on Age of Youngest Child	Staff:Child Ratio	Max. Group Size
No child or children under the age of two (2) years	1:12	12
One (1) or two (2) children under the age of two (2) years	1:10 / 2:12	10 / 12
Three (3) or more children under the age of two (2) years	1:9 / 2:12	10 / 12

The ratio of children to staff and maximum group size in mixed age groups shall be determined by the age of the youngest child in attendance.

Each adult staff member who is providing direct care for a child or children shall be counted by as one (1) staff member.

Each staff member sixteen (16) and seventeen (17) years of age under the supervision of an adult staff member, when providing direct care for a child or children, may be counted as one (1) staff member.

Each child shall be counted as one (1) child for purposes of counting the number of children in attendance and for determining compliance with child-staff ratio.

Staff:child ratios and maximum group sizes must be maintained at all times during all hours of operation when children are in attendance and when transporting children. Staff:child ratio must be maintained during outdoor play.

Providers are encouraged to contact their local Idaho STARS Child Care Resource Centers through the Idaho Care Line by dialing 211 to acquire information and ideas on how to maintain group size and ensure the health and safety of children during outdoor play.

Adapted from Department of Health and Welfare website <http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/>