



# Choosing Child Care in New York City

What Every Parent Needs to Know

## How to Choose a Safe and Nurturing Place

Good childcare is more than babysitting. It encourages children to play and learn in a stimulating, nurturing and safe environment.

New York City government licenses, regulates and inspects child care facilities to protect children's health.

Use this booklet to guide your search for child care and learn about what the law requires.

### Take your time and ask for help

If you can, give yourself at least three months:

- Ask relatives, friends and neighbors to recommend places or tell you which to avoid.
- Call 311 or visit [nyc.gov/health/childcare](https://nyc.gov/health/childcare) for names of licensed sites in your neighborhood and to review inspection results.
- Compare the child care options available (group child care, home-based child care, school-based and school-age programs and summer camps).

### See for yourself

Visit every site.

- Is the staff warm and friendly? Do they talk to children with affection and respect and listen to them with interest? Do they treat children well – never shouting, grabbing or being mean?
- Do the children look happy?
- Are they supervised at all times, indoors and out?
- Are there plenty of toys and equipment (blocks, puzzles, books, clay, musical instruments) and activities to help children develop and learn?



## Ask questions

- Which languages are spoken?
- What are the hours? Is the site open on weekends?
- Can you walk in any time? (*The answer should be “yes”!*)
- Do you need to bring diapers or other supplies?
- What are the fees? Lower-income families may be eligible for free or low-cost child care or an income tax credit (*call 311 to see if you qualify*).

## What the Law Requires

### The site must be properly licensed and inspected

- The New York City Health Department and the New York State Office of Children and Family Services regulate most child care settings. The Health Department inspects and issues permits, licenses and registrations for New York City sites.
- The provider must post a current license on the wall where you can see it.
- Child care centers must be in compliance with Fire Department and Buildings Department regulations.

## **Everyone who works or lives at the site must be screened to be with children**

- All program staff, volunteers and household members of home-based services who are 18 or older must undergo a criminal and child abuse/maltreatment background check.
- Staff who transport children and work for the child care center or one of its contractors must also be screened.
- Staff must be in good health, as certified by a health care provider, and get a medical checkup.

## **Safety regulations require that all child care sites:**

- Have more than one exit and an emergency evacuation plan.
- Have adequate toilet and sink facilities equipped with soap and paper towels.
- Cover radiators and pipes in rooms where children may be. Portable heaters may not be used in these rooms.
- Install window barriers.
- Install barriers to keep children from swimming pools or other bodies of water. *(You must give written permission for your child to use the pool.)*
- Have a working telephone and post emergency phone numbers.
- Adhere to New York State Department of Transportation regulations if transportation is provided and receive parents' approval for transporting children in care.

## **Regulations require that all programs caring for infants provide a safe sleeping environment that includes:**

- Placing infants on their backs to allow for movement during sleep.

- Using only cribs and bassinets approved by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.
- Keeping the sleeping area free of bumper pads, toys, heavy blankets, pillows or infant positioners unless medically prescribed.
- Prohibiting the use of car seats.

### **Health regulations require that all sites:**

- Confirm that enrolled children have had a complete physical examination and received all required immunizations.
- Have an approved health care plan.
- Be approved to give medication (other than over-the-counter ointments) to children.
- Get written consent from a parent to get emergency medical care, if needed.
- Keep a first-aid kit accessible.
- Prohibit staff from smoking cigarettes or consuming alcohol or drugs during child care hours.
- Have a caregiver on site who is certified in C.P.R.
- Inform a parent if a child is sick or injured in care.



# NYC child care connect

- **Sign up** to receive text and email updates about your program.
- **Get notified** about new inspection reports or when new permitted programs open in your area.
- **Search and compare** child care programs across the city.
- **Learn** about the steps providers must take to keep your child safe.

Visit [nyc.gov](https://nyc.gov) and search NYC Child Care Connect TODAY!



**Before you enroll your child,  
visit the site one more time.**

### **Ask yourself**

- ✓ Will my child learn and be happy here?
- ✓ Am I comfortable leaving my child here?
- ✓ Can I afford the fees here?

### **More Information**

- If your child is 4 years old, learn more about Pre-K for All at [nyc.gov/PreK](https://nyc.gov/PreK).
- To see if you qualify for subsidized day care, call 311 or visit [nyc.gov/acs](https://nyc.gov/acs).
- For more information about state-regulated programs, such as home-based care or school-age child care, visit [ocfs.ny.gov](https://ocfs.ny.gov).

**To get this brochure in other languages,  
call 311 or visit [nyc.gov](http://nyc.gov).**

**To report any site that you think is  
unsafe, unhealthy or operating illegally,  
call 311 and ask about child care.**