

CHOOSING CHILD CARE



Child Care Center

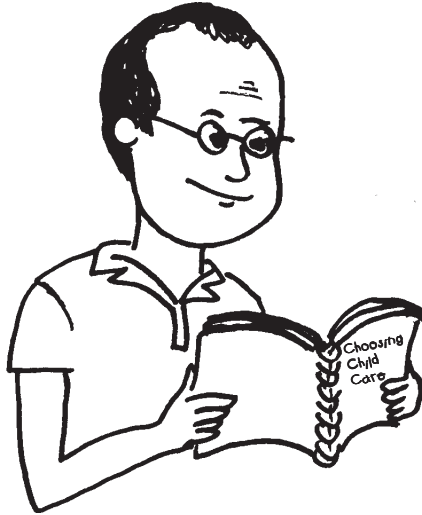


Family Child Care Home



Relative or Friend Care

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 College of Tropical Agriculture and Human
 Resources, University of Hawai'i,
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Choosing Child Care

Selecting child care for your infant, toddler, or preschooler is one of the most important decisions you'll make as a parent. This booklet provides information to help you with your decision.

Quality Child Care

Quality child care is important. Children's brains develop rapidly during their first 5 years. Much learning and growing takes place at this young age, such as:

- Developing skills for communicating with others
- Learning to control the small and large muscles of their bodies
- Making discoveries about the world through play
- Forming unique personalities
- Learning how to work and play with others.

Children's early interactions with people have a strong influence on brain development. Experiences in these early years can shape the way children learn, think, and behave for the rest of their lives. Everyone who cares for them—parents, family members, child care providers, and friends—can make a difference in raising healthy, happy, confident children.

When you're choosing a child care provider, look for one who:

- Loves to do things together with your child
- Has toys that match your child's age
- Talks to and reads to your child every day
- Praises your child's accomplishments
- Knows how to guide children and encourage appropriate behavior using effective methods instead of using harsh punishment
- Provides a safe, interesting environment where children are not bored.



Terms

Adult-child ratio: The adult-child ratio is the recommended and desirable number of adults in one setting who are available to care for a specific number of children. For example, a ratio of 1:3 means that in one child care setting, there should be 1 adult for every 3 children. The recommended ratio depends on the children's ages. Babies and young children need lots of one-to-one attention. Low adult-child ratios and small group sizes are important ingredients in quality care.

Licensed care provider. A licensed care provider has received a certificate of approval issued by the State authorizing the operation of a child care facility. Licensed care providers meet certain minimum health, safety, and training standards, including first aid and CPR training. For more information about licensing requirements, call the child care licensing unit nearest you. (For phone numbers, see the "Resources" section of this booklet.)

License-exempt care provider. A license-exempt care provider is not required to meet the State's licensing requirements. License-exempt care providers can care for up to 2 children who are not related to the provider, in addition to their own children or relatives.

Accredited care provider. An accredited care provider has met quality care standards and criteria above and beyond the minimum required by licensing. Accreditation is provided by organizations such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Types of Child Care

When selecting care for your child, you can choose from different types of child care settings.

Relative or Friend Care

A **relative** is someone in your family—such as an aunty, uncle, grandma, or grandpa—who may be willing to care for your child. A **friend** is someone you know and trust who may be available to provide child care. **Relative or friend care** is a **license-exempt** form of child care.

Family Child Care Home

A **family child care home** is operated by a provider who cares for several children in his or her own home. **Licensed** family child care providers must meet minimum standards for health, safety, and adult-child ratio. A maximum of 6 children can be cared for at one time in the home. Of the 6, no more than 2 children under the age of 18 months can be cared for at one time. If there is additional help, up to 4 children under 18 months can be cared for at one time.

Child Care Centers

A **child care center** is a place that is set up specifically to provide child care. Child care centers include day nurseries, preschool/nursery school groups, preschool child play groups, parent cooperatives, drop-in child care centers, and group child care homes. **Licensed** child care centers must meet State minimum standards for health, safety, staff qualifications, and adult-child ratio.





Selecting Good Child Care

Finding quality care that is convenient and affordable can be a challenge. Here are some tips on finding the care that is right for your child. At the back of this booklet there are worksheets you can copy and use to help you make your decision.

Step 1: Consider your options.

Think about what type of child care would be best for your child. Consider your child's temperament, interests, and needs and what would best match them. Some young children need more structure than others; some need more interaction with other children; some have special needs. Also think about your family's needs: What do you want for your child? How much can you afford? At what times do you need child care?

To help you decide, use the information in the Child Care Comparison Chart (page 6). When making your decision, remember that the **quality of the learning and caring environment** is more important than the type of care setting. **Health and safety practices** are also important.

Step 2: Identify possible care providers.

Once you know the type of care option(s) you're interested in, identify several care providers to contact. Here are some ways to get started:

- Ask friends and co-workers for recommendations of care providers that they may be familiar with.
- Contact PATCH, a child care resource and referral agency, for names of licensed family care homes and child care centers, as well as other useful information about child care. (For phone numbers, see the "Resources" section of this booklet.)
- Call the licensing unit of the State of Hawai'i Department of Human Services for information about whether a provider has a current license, has any licensing deficiencies, or has been reported for any child care complaints.

Step 3: Interview providers.

It's important that **you** feel good about your child's care provider. Schedule a phone or in-person interview with each care provider you are considering. During the interview:

- Ask a lot of questions to learn about the care your child might get (see worksheets for sample questions).
- Look for answers that match or come close to your own feelings about raising children.
- Check to see whether the care provider's availability and costs match your needs.
- Ask for a tour of the facilities to observe children's activities and interactions.



Step 4: Visit, observe, and evaluate what you see.

Schedule time to observe the care provider or center while other children are there. Give yourself at least 30 minutes to find out whether you feel comfortable with a provider or center. Get permission to bring your child along with you. You want to be sure your child is happy with your choice. Ask yourself the questions in the Observation Checklist provided at the end of this booklet.

Step 5: Check references.

Ask the providers for the names and phone numbers of at least two parents who are currently using or have previously used their services. Call these parents and ask them what they think about the care their children are getting. Most parents are eager to share information with other parents. They may give you information and insights that you could not get any other way.

Step 6: Make a decision.

Review the information you collected from your interviews, observations, and reference checks. If you have questions that were not answered, call back and get more information. **Trust your instincts** when making your decision. If you're not comfortable with what you found so far, keep looking. It's okay to be picky—you are responsible for your child's health and safety.

Step 7: Follow up.

After you choose a child care provider, follow up: observe and monitor the situation. Does your child seem happy? Are you comfortable with the provider's care? If problems arise, try to work them out with your provider. If you cannot resolve them, it's okay to make a change. However, try not to make too many changes. Your child needs continuing and stable care at this young age.

Preparing Your Child

When your child goes to a new care setting, both of you may feel "separation anxiety." Your child might be afraid of being in a new place and may cry or cling to you when you try to leave. You may feel guilty or unsure about leaving your child in someone else's care. These are normal feelings. Over time, as your child gets used to the new setting, drop-off time will be easier. To help:

- Talk to your child about what is going to happen before starting a new child care arrangement.



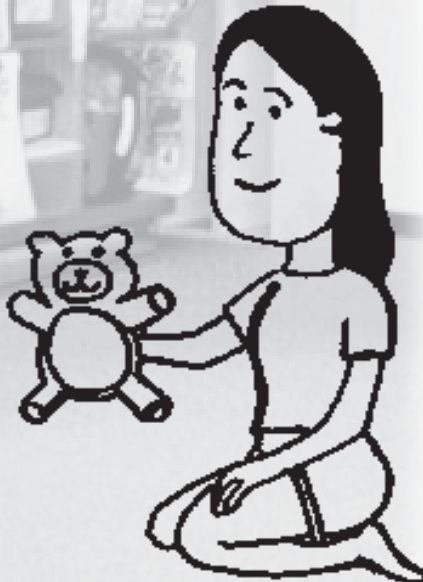
- Familiarize your child with the new setting by arranging a visit and spending some time there with your child.
- Let your child bring a favorite toy or “lovie” or a family photograph to help deal with being in a new place.
- Work with your child care provider to establish a drop-off routine. Set a positive tone for the day. When you drop off your child, take a few minutes to greet the child care provider, help get your child involved in an activity, say “Goodbye,” and leave. A regular drop-off routine helps your child adjust more quickly.

Working With Your Child’s Care Provider


Choosing the right care provider is just the start of making sure that your child receives the nurturing and guidance needed. By working together, you and your care provider can help your child get off to a safe, healthy start and be ready to succeed in school!

Here are some ways to work together successfully:

- Treat each other with respect. Don’t think of your provider as “just a babysitter.” Know that many providers have years of experience and training.
- Make time to talk with your care provider. Share what’s going on at home that may affect your child’s behavior. Ask about your child’s day in the care setting.
- Discuss the concerns you or your care provider may have when they happen, but not in front of your child. Find ways to work together to address these concerns.
- Respect your care provider’s rules about what to do when your child is sick. To protect the health of other children in the provider’s care, you may be asked to keep your child at home.
- Follow rules about what to bring (or not bring) to the child care setting.
- Have a back-up plan for child care in case your provider or your child is sick.
- Be involved. Volunteer to help out whenever possible.
- Pick up your child on time at the end of the day. If you are running late, call ahead of time. Remember, your provider has other commitments to attend to just as you do.
- Pay your care provider on time. Your provider relies on your payment just as you rely on your paycheck.






Child Care Comparison Chart


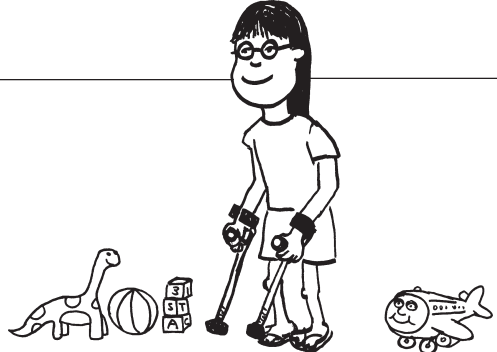
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<p>Advantages</p>	<p>A relative or friend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides care in a home-like setting. • May be someone that your child trusts and feels comfortable with. • May provide a sense of “extended family.” • May be more flexible about caring for children who are ill. • May be more willing to provide a flexible schedule. 	<p>A licensed family care home provider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides care in a home-like setting. • May offer more opportunities for a child to interact with children of other ages. • Has some formal training, including first aid and CPR, to provide a safe, healthy learning environment for children. • Must have a doctor or nurse who is available to consult about health questions. • May be more willing to provide a flexible schedule. • Must have another adult “on-call” in case of emergencies. 	<p>A licensed center:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has more than one adult to care for your child. • Is able to provide care even when there are staff emergencies. (If a teacher is sick, another teacher or substitute will be there to care for your child.) • Provides more opportunities for a child to interact with other children. • Has staff who have formal training in child development and early education, as well as first aid and CPR. Many child care centers require teachers to be certified (which shows that a teacher has completed college courses). 																																				
<p>Potential Disadvantages</p>	<p>A relative or friend:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May not be trained in child care and in health, first aid, and CPR. • May work alone, unobserved by others. • If working alone, may have more difficulty handling emergencies. • May experience stress and tiredness from long hours and isolation. • May not be available for child care when he/she is sick or has family emergencies. 	<p>A licensed family care home provider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May work alone, unobserved by others. • If working alone, may have more difficulty handling emergencies. • May experience stress and tiredness from long hours and isolation. • May not be available for child care when he/she is sick or has family emergencies. 	<p>A licensed center:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May feel large and impersonal. • May have shift changes during the day which could mean: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - your child may have to adjust to two or more teachers each day. - there may be communication gaps between teachers and parents. • May require more conformity (children must follow rules) and routine (stricter schedules) than home-based care. 																																				

Sample Interview Questions Worksheets


Select the questions that best address your concerns and discuss them during your interviews with child care providers you are considering.

Provider's Name _____

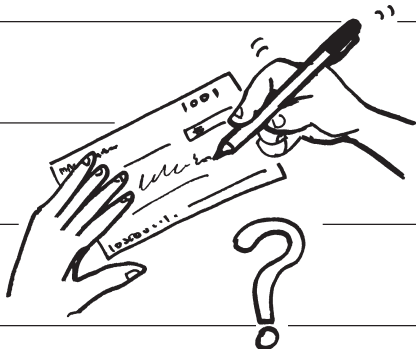
Level of Quality	Comments/Notes
How long have you been working with children?	
What kind of education or training do you have in child development and care?	
What do you like best about children?	
Tell me what a typical day looks like.	
Is there an enclosed yard or playground where the children can play outside?	
How do you discipline children (for example, when a child hits or bites another child)?	
How do you handle emergencies?	
What do you do if a child gets sick or hurt?	

<p>How do you handle a child's special medical needs, e.g. allergies, asthma, medications ?</p>	
<p>How many children do you care for?</p>	
<p>When do the children take naps?</p>	
<p>How many adults are there per child?</p>	
<p>For relative, friend, or family care home providers: Do you have any pets?</p>	
<p>For relative, friend, or family care home providers: Do you smoke?</p>	
<p>For relative, friend, or family care providers: Who else has regular access to the home?</p>	
<p>How do you let parents know about the child's day?</p>	
<p>Other questions:</p>	

Availability:

What hours are you available for full- or part-time care?	
What ages do you accept?	
Do you have any openings? If not, is there a waiting list?	
Other questions:	


Cost:


What are your fees?	
Are fees different for full- or part-time care?	
Are there different fees for children of different ages?	
Do fees include breakfast and/or lunch? How many snacks are provided each day?	
When are fees due?	
Is there still a charge when a child is sick or on vacation?	
Are there extra fees—late pick-up, early drop-off, supplies?	
Other questions:	

Observation Worksheet

Photocopy as needed.

Provider's Name _____

Observation	Comments/Notes
Does the provider play with the children?	
Does the provider talk, sing, and read with children throughout the day?	 A black and white line drawing of a provider sitting on the floor, holding an open book and reading to three children. The children are also sitting on the floor, looking at the book. The provider is a woman with short hair, and the children are two boys and one girl.
Do the children seem happy and confident?	
Does the provider set limits that are reasonable for the age of the child?	
Does the home or center look safe? (Use Health and Safety Checklist)	

Health and Safety Checklist	Yes	No	Comments
Are the electrical outlets covered?			
Are there safety latches on cabinets and drawers? Are they high or difficult enough so that young children cannot open them?			
Are there safety gates at the top and bottom of stairways?			
Are there smoke detectors? Fire extinguishers?			
Does the provider have a first aid kit?			
Does the provider have training in first aid and CPR?			
Is there an evacuation plan posted and practiced in the event of a fire?			
Is there an emergency contact card for each child?			
Are emergency numbers clearly posted?			
Does the caregiver wash hands after diapering, after using the toilet, and before preparing meals and snacks?			
Is food prepared and stored in a safe manner?			
Is a weekly menu available? (Helpful to spot food allergies.)			
Does the provider use car seats for transporting children?			
Is there a procedure for ensuring children's safety on outings ?			
Are outside play areas enclosed?			
Are medicines and dangerous (e.g., knives, firearms, small or sharp objects) or poisonous materials (e.g., cleaners, chemicals) kept in locked cabinets or out of children's reach?			
Other:			

Resources

Child Care Subsidies

Families who meet income eligibility requirements can receive a subsidy (financial aid) from the Department of Human Services (DSH) to help with child care costs. Call **The Parent Line** at the number listed below to find out whom to call for more information about child care subsidies.

Licensing Units, Department of Human Services, State of Hawai'i

The Department of Human Services (DHS) licenses family child care homes and child care centers. DHS also monitors the current license status, licensing deficiencies, and reports of child care complaints for licensed providers. To check on licensed child care providers, contact the licensing unit nearest you. The following is a list of the child care licensing units statewide:

Child Care Connection Hawai'i Unit I

Pohulani Elderly Housing Project
677 Queen Street, Room 400A
Honolulu, HI 96813
Phone: 587-5266

Child Care Connection Hawai'i Unit II

Waipahu Civic Center
94-275 Mokuola Street, Room 203
Waipahu, HI 96797
Phone: 675-0470

Central Hilo Unit

Prince Kūhiō Plaza
111 East Pū'ainakō Street, Suite A-101
Hilo, HI 96720
Phone: 959-0669

North Kona 2 Unit

Lanihau Professional Center
75-5591 Palani Road, Room 2004
Kailua-Kona, HI 96740

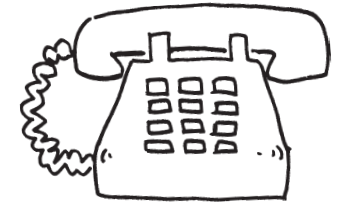
Phone: 327-4755

Maui Central Unit

Waiehu Beach Center
270 Waiehu Beach Road, Suite 107
Wailuku, HI 96793
Phone: 243-5866

South Unit

Dynasty Court
4473 Pahe'e Street, Suite G
Lihu'e, HI 96766
Phone: 241-3660



The Parent Line

The Parent Line is a confidential State-wide phone line for parents and others with concerns about children. The Parent Line specializes in child and adolescent growth, development, and behavior. It offers support, encouragement, and information about parenting. The staff helps callers with problem-solving and concerns, sends parenting information when requested, and makes referrals to community resources when appropriate.

Hours: M-F: 8 am-6 pm and Sat: 9 am-1 pm.
Phone: 526-1222 (O'ahu)
1-800-816-1222 (toll free from other islands)

PATCH (People Attentive to Children)

PATCH is the State's child care resource and referral agency. Call PATCH for information on family child care homes, child care centers, and other early childhood services.

Phone: 839-1988 (O'ahu)
246-0622 (Kaua'i)
329-7101 (West Hawai'i)
961-3169 (East Hawai'i)
242-9232 (Maui)
1 (800) 498-4145 (toll free from Moloka'i & Lāna'i)

email: patch@patch_hi.org



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