

EARLY LEARNING PROGRAMS IN FLORIDA

What is Family Child Care?

Family child care is defined as child care in small group sizes with children from at least two unrelated families. Care is provided in the provider's home located in a residential neighborhood. There are three types of family child care homes:

- Registered Family Child Care Homes.
- Licensed Family Child Care Homes.
- Licensed Large Family Child Care Homes.

Child Care Resource and Referral

The **Child Care Resource and Referral Program** (CCR&R) is a statewide and local program that helps families

- Identify and select quality early learning programs.
- Connect to local community agencies and resources.
- Engage in their children's education and learning.
- Locate financial resource options.

School Readiness Program

Florida's **School Readiness Program** offers financial assistance for early education programs and child care to low-income families. The program encourages and supports families to become financially self-sufficient and to prepare their young children to be successful in school.

Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program

The **Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program** (VPK) is a free prekindergarten program for 4- and 5-year-olds who reside in Florida. Parents can enroll their child in the state's free VPK program if their child is 4 years old on or before Sept. 1 of the current school year. If the child's birthday is between Feb. 2 and Sept. 1, parents may choose to wait and enroll their child the following year at age 5.

Head Start and Early Head Start

The **Head Start and Early Head Start** (HS/EHS) program provides comprehensive education, health, nutrition and parent involvement services to low-income families and their children ages birth through age 5. HS/EHS provides child care and education for children in a classroom setting.

Contact Us

For more information, please contact your local early learning coalition. Find their contact information at www.floridaearlylearning.com/coalitions. The CCR&R State Network can also help connect you with your local early learning coalition's CCR&R program.

Toll free: 1-866-357-3239

Email: crrhelp@oel.myflorida.com

Florida Department of Education
Florida Office of Early Learning

Child Care Resource and Referral State Network
250 Marriott Drive, Tallahassee, FL 32399



QUALITY CHECKLIST



For Family Child Care Homes



OFFICE OF

Early Learning

LEARN EARLY. LEARN FOR LIFE

OBSERVATION TIPS

Look and Listen

You learn a great deal by watching and listening to what is going on in the learning environment. Children should seem happy and engaged in age-appropriate activities. Providers should seem kind, nurturing and responsive to all children in their care. Listen to the words providers use when talking to the children. Children need to hear a wide variety of words to promote their language development.

Ask Questions

If you have any questions or concerns, **write them down as they occur to you.** Ask for a time to discuss them with the family child care home provider. They should be willing to answer your questions and address any concerns you may have.

Pay attention to your instincts

Take note of any uneasy feelings you may have during your visit. **You know your child best.** If possible, take your child with you and see how they react. Children respond in their own unique ways to new situations. Be careful not to rule out other factors that could influence your child’s reaction such as being hungry or tired. **Trust your instincts and your ability to make wise decisions for your child.** You want to feel good about your child spending many hours each day in a family child care home.

Consider Costs

Take into consideration any additional fees. Carefully weigh the “pros” and “cons” of each family child care home you visit. Decide which one meets the greatest number of your priorities at a rate you can afford. Keep in mind that the highest cost does not always guarantee the best quality. Likewise, the least expensive rates do not always suggest poor quality.

Make an Informed Decision

Your first concern is your child’s safety, health and welfare. Every program will have positive features, but **only you can decide what is most important.** Now that you have done your homework and some careful thinking, you are ready to make your choice. Remember, selecting and placing your child in an early learning program is just the beginning. **Talk to the provider often and visit occasionally** to ensure your child is safe and happy and your decision was the right one.

Select providers you plan to visit and write their information here.

Provider 1	
Provider 2	
Provider 3	

Family Engagement

Questions To Ask/Things To Consider	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
Can parents stop by at any time?			
Are parents encouraged to volunteer or participate in activities?			
Is there a daily method of communication between the provider and parents?			
Is there a current weekly schedule posted in a visible location?			
Is your initial reaction upon entering the family child care home a positive one?			

Family engagement is important because it

- Supports children’s school readiness skills.
- Increases children’s motivation and reduces challenging behavior.
- Improves children’s social and emotional development such as impulse control, attention span, memory and planning skills.
- Supports the healthy development of all children.

How can families get involved?


- Communicate with the provider or teacher on a regular basis.
- Create a positive learning environment at home.
- Read to your child daily.
- Participate in community events for families.
- Volunteer at the center or in a classroom if you have time in your schedule.
- Participate in family meetings, parent-teacher conferences and parenting classes.
- Join the school’s advisory board or groups that help make decisions for the school.


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También disponible en español

See how Vroom tips align with Florida’s Early Learning and Developmental Standards at <http://flbt5.floridaearlylearning.com/families.html>

Environments for Learning			
Questions To Ask/Things To Consider	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
What are the ratios? <i>Look for small groups and ratios (ex. 1 adult for 4 infants).</i>			
Does the provider seem patient and responsive to children's needs?			
Are toys, books and furniture clean and in good shape? <i>There should be enough for all children in the classroom.</i>			
Are toys and materials accessible to children?			
Are the children happy?			
Are the children engaged in activities? <i>Activities should be age-appropriate.</i>			
Does the program appear to be culturally responsive? <i>Are translated materials available or other accommodations made available for families and children as needed?</i>			
Does the provider read daily to children and are books provided for children to use independently?			
Are songs, finger plays and interactive nursery rhymes part of daily routines?			
Is there space for active and quiet play?			
How does the provider use technology to support learning? How often is technology used?			

What are Positive Teacher-Child Relationships?

In early childhood settings, each moment that teachers and children interact with one another is an opportunity to develop positive relationships.

To build positive relationships, teachers and caregivers should

- Engage in one-to-one interactions with children.
- Get on the child's level for face-to-face interactions.
- Use a pleasant, calm voice and simple language.
- Provide warm, responsive physical contact.
- Follow the child's lead and interest during play.
- Help children understand classroom expectations.
- Redirect children when they engage in challenging behavior.
- Listen to children and encourage them to listen to others.
- Acknowledge children for their accomplishments and effort.

Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning, What Works Briefs

Provider Information			
Questions To Ask/Things To Consider	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
How far is it from home/work?			
Do the hours of operation and holiday schedule accommodate your work schedule?			
What is the rate or cost of care? <i>For infants, toddlers, preschool, school-age</i>			
Are there discounts or priority for siblings?			
Are there any additional fees and how often are they due? <i>Weekly, monthly, quarterly, etc.</i>			
<i>supplies/materials</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>meals/snacks</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>registration/application</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>early drop-off/late pick-up</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>field trips or special activities</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>late payment</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>other</i> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
What are the drop-off and pick-up times? <i>You can also ask about their check in/check out procedures.</i>			
Does the provider charge when a child is out sick or on vacation?			
Does the provider offer safe and reliable transportation? <i>Drivers should be licensed and insured. Children should be properly restrained in appropriate car safety seats.</i>			
Does the provider have specialized training for children with a variety of special needs?			
Does the provider participate in the subsidized child care program? <i>School Readiness Program</i>			
Does the provider participate in the state's VPK program? <i>For 4- and 5-year-olds</i>			
Does the provider offer Head Start or Early Head Start? <i>For children under 5 years old</i>			

Did you know?

The Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) and local licensing agencies monitor and inspect licensed family child care homes and large family child care homes to ensure their health and safety, background screening and training requirements are in compliance with state and federal laws.



You can find inspection reports and other valuable resources on their website at <http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/child-care/parent-resources>.

Health and Safety			
Questions To Ask/Things To Consider	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
Is the provider licensed, registered or accredited?			
Can they provide their state inspection history?			
Has the provider completed background checks on all caregivers and family members? <i>Required</i>			
What is the discipline policy? <i>Required</i>			
Is the home safe, clean and welcoming?			
Are strict emergency and security plans in place? <i>Required</i>			
How are children accounted for throughout the day? <i>Required</i>			
Are fire extinguishers, working smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors (if the home has natural gas) on site? <i>Required</i>			
Is there a safe, fenced outdoor area? <i>Required</i>			
Is there shade available outside where the children play?			
Do the children have an opportunity to play outside each day?			
Is there a variety of outside equipment/toys available and appropriate for various ages?			
Are medicines and cleaners in a locked area out of reach of children? <i>Required</i>			
What is the policy for administering medications?			
Are healthy and nutritious snacks/meals provided? <i>Programs should have planned weekly menus available.</i>			
How often does diapering/toileting occur?			
Is handwashing done frequently?			
Does the home have pets and are they vaccinated? <i>If so, pets must have up-to-date immunizations and be disease free.</i>			
How are naptimes and sleeping arrangements managed?			
Are safe sleep practices followed?			

Well-Trained Staff			
Questions To Ask/Things To Consider	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
Is the provider(s) well-trained? <i>May include a degree in early childhood, required teacher/director certifications, ongoing professional development and trainings, etc.</i>			
What other family members will be present during child care hours?			
Does the provider have a substitute for illness/vacation and does the substitute meet state requirements?			
Is the provider trained to administer developmental screenings and identify children who may need additional services? <i>If not, ask where developmental screenings take place.</i>			
Does the provider participate in a local quality rating and improvement system or has there been a program assessment completed recently?			
Does the family child care home have a Gold Seal designation?			

QRIS

A Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) is designed to assess and improve the quality of early learning programs. Florida does not have a statewide QRIS program; however, some counties have implemented a local QRIS. Check with your local early learning coalition to see if they have a QRIS and what information they can give you about your potential family child care home.

Program Assessment

Family child care home providers in Florida who participate in the School Readiness Program may receive an assessment using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) tool. CLASS is an observation-based program assessment that measures the quality of interactions between teachers and children. CLASS is recognized internationally for capturing elements within a classroom that improve child outcomes including increased math achievement, stronger vocabulary and reading outcomes and better classroom behavior. **If the family child care home provider participates in the School Readiness Program, ask about their CLASS score.**

