



# CHOOSING CHILD CARE CHECKLIST



What is important to you and your family when choosing child care: Cost? Hours? Location? Quality of care? Before visiting programs, take a moment to reflect on your priorities and your child's needs. The checklist on page 2 offers helpful questions to guide your visit and support finding the best fit for your family. But first, let's explore what it means to be a licensed child care provider in Georgia.

## WHY CHOOSE A LICENSED CHILD CARE PROGRAM?

By choosing a licensed program, you can be assured that your child's health and safety are the top priority.

All licensed child care programs in Georgia must:

- Comply with comprehensive state health and safety guidelines
- Receive a minimum of two unannounced inspections per year from the state of Georgia to ensure the program is following health and safety guidelines.
- Have all child care program staff certified in pediatric CPR and First Aid
- Have all child care program employees maintain a satisfactory criminal background check.
- Complete routine cleaning and sanitation of indoor and outdoor play areas and equipment.
- Prohibit smoking on premises during hours of operation.
- Require teachers and directors to complete a minimum of 10 hours of professional child care and child development training per year.

Quality Rated is an initiative of the Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning.



 Visit [QualityRated.org](https://QualityRated.org)

Questions? Contact us at **877-ALL GA-KIDS** or [FindQRcare@dec.al.gov](mailto:FindQRcare@dec.al.gov)



Decide which type of child care provider your family prefers:

## FAMILY CHILD CARE LEARNING HOME

A program operated in a private residential home that provides child care for children less than 18 years of age for less than 24 hours per day. Family Child Care Learning Homes care for 3, but no more than 6 children, for a fee.

## CHILD CARE LEARNING CENTER

A program operated by an individual or business that provides group care for a fee. These have 7 or more children under 18 years of age, for less than 24 hours.

## MAKE SURE THE PROGRAM IS QUALITY RATED

Quality Rated programs are evaluated and rated based on many factors that contribute to ideal environments and experiences for children's development. All rated programs demonstrate a commitment to quality early care by exceeding Georgia's licensing standards. Whether they have earned 1, 2, or 3 stars, they have all demonstrated dedication to continuous quality improvement.

Contact the **Quality Rated Family Call Center** for personalized help finding quality programs that fit your needs, at (877)-ALL-GA-KIDS or [FindQRcare@decals.ga.gov](mailto:FindQRcare@decals.ga.gov), or visit Quality Rated's free online search tool at [QualityRated.org](http://QualityRated.org).

**Get to know potential child care providers. Understand how they maintain licensing standards and ensure quality care. Here are some questions to ask during your visit to help make the best choice for your family:**

## LICENSING & QUALITY

- Is the program licensed by the State of Georgia?
- Is the program Quality Rated? If not, are they in the process?

## SAFETY & HEALTH

- What safety measures are in place to ensure child well-being?
- What are the teacher-student ratios?
- What are the policies when a child becomes ill?
- How often and where are diapers changed?
- Is there an emergency plan for contacting families?

## STAFF & ADMINISTRATION

- What education and experience do the teachers have?
- Is a program administrator on-site every day?
- Will my child have the same staff and group regularly?
- Do staff receive training and continuing education?
- Do staff have breaks and time to plan activities?

## CURRICULUM & ACTIVITIES

- Does the program have developmentally appropriate lesson plans for each group or classroom? Are they followed?
- Does the program use a curriculum aligned to the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS)?
- Do children have time to play on their own with varied toys, friends, and activities?
- Is supervised, outdoor play provided daily?
- Is rest time based on the needs of each individual child?

## FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

- Does the program encourage families to enter the classroom and allow parents to drop by unannounced?
- How will I hear about my child's day?

## NUTRITION

- Does the program participate in CACFP for free nutritious meals and snacks?
- Do teachers sit with children while eating to monitor and interact?
- What are the rules about food from home?
- Are children's choices, appetites, allergies, and religious or cultural restrictions respected?
- Are the USDA guidelines followed for appropriate foods, portions, and timing of meals and snacks?

## BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE

- Are limits reasonable, clear, consistent, and developmentally appropriate?
- Do staff use calm voices to help children understand appropriate behavior?
- What happens when children hit, bite, or bully?

## COST & LOGISTICS

- How much does tuition cost based on my child's age?
- How much is before/after school care?
- Does the program provide transportation?
- Are there discounts (siblings, sliding scale fees)?
- If eligible, does the program accept CAPS?
- What is the policy on overage costs that CAPS may not cover?

## What to notice during a visit:

- Is the facility child-proofed inside and outside (cleaning supplies, medications, outlets)?
- Is the setting happy, comfortable, and organized?
- Do the children and teachers seem happy and engaged in activities?
- Are there enough staff members to give attention to all children?
- Do I feel respected as my child's first and most important teacher?