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CHOOSING CHILD CARE

PREPARED BY
Placer County Office of Education
Early Childhood Education

PCOE
GOLD IN EDUCATION

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CHOOSING CHILD CARE - PARENTAL CHOICE

The Placer County Office of Education Resource and Referral understands that choosing the right child care is a personal decision as every family has its own needs, values, and priorities.

As you explore your options, remember that this decision is yours to make guided by what feels right for your child and your family.

There is no one-size-fits all solution. What matters most is finding an environment where your child feels safe, nurtured, and supported to grow and learn.

Resource and Referral is here to provide guidance, answer questions and support you when choosing the best child care option for your child.

TYPES OF CHILD CARE

- **Head Start:** A Federal program that promotes school readiness of children ages birth to five from low income families by enhancing their cognitive, social and emotional development. Head Start services are at no cost to families who qualify. All staff are required to have a criminal background check.
- **State-Funded Centers:** A high-quality preschool and child care program funded by the California Department of Education, serving children birth through age 13. Title 5 programs provide financial assistance for child care to families who qualify. These programs benefit children by providing quality child care, with monitoring to ensure a child's healthy growth and development. All staff are required to have a criminal background check.
- **Child Care Center:** Child Care Centers provide care for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and/or school-age children for all or part of the day. These facilities may be large or small and can be operated independently by nonprofit organizations or for-profit companies, or by churches, school districts, and other organizations. All staff are required to have a criminal background check.

TYPES OF CHILD CARE

- Family Child Care Home: A Family Child Care Provider cares for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and/or school-age children all or part of the day. These facilities provide care for a small group of children in the caregivers' home. A Family Child Care Provider can be licensed for 8 children or up to 14 for a large group with an assistant. The licensee and any other adults in the home are required to have a criminal background check.
- License Exempt Child Care: A License Exempt Provider means that the child care provider or center is not required to obtain a child care license. This may include nannies, friends, relatives, school districts, and recreation districts. Not all license exempt providers are required to have a background check. These providers may be required to be TrustLine Registered.

QUESTIONS TO ASK A CHILD CARE PROVIDER

General Information

- Is the child care facility licensed?
- What are your hours of operation?
- What ages of children do you accept?
- What is your child-to-staff ratio?
- What qualifications or training do the caregivers have?
- Do staff members have CPR and first aid training?
- Does the caregiver/staff have a background check on file?
- How do you handle emergency situations (e.g., fire, severe weather, medical emergencies)?
- What is your sick child policy?
- What is your vacation policy?
- What steps do you take to maintain a clean and safe environment?
- Can you describe a typical day for the children in your care?
- Is outdoor play included in the daily schedule? How often?
- Do you follow a specific curriculum? If so, what is it?
- Do you provide meals and snacks, or should I pack food for my child?
- What types of food do you serve?
- How do you accommodate allergies or dietary restrictions?
- What is your policy on discipline and handling challenging behaviors?
- How do you encourage positive behavior and social skills?
- How do you keep parents informed about their child's day?
- Do you administer medications, and if so, what is the process?
- What are your fees, and what is included in the cost?
- Do you require a deposit or registration fee?
- What is your policy on late pick-ups and fees?
- Do you accept subsidies?
- Can you provide references from current or past parents?

QUESTIONS TO ASK A CHILD CARE PROVIDER

Infant Care

- Do you have experience caring for infants?
- What is your caregiver-to-infant ratio?
- Do you have training in early childhood development, particularly for infants?
- How do you support milestones like tummy time, crawling, and early language development?
- How do you handle feeding schedules?
- Do you follow parent-provided feeding instructions (e.g., breast milk, formula, solid food introduction)?
- How do you manage nap schedules, and where do infants sleep?
- What is your policy on safe sleep practices?
- How do you document daily care routines (e.g., feeding, diaper changes, naps)?
- What is your diaper-changing procedure?
- Are toys and equipment cleaned regularly and safe for infants?
- How do you provide one-on-one attention to infants?
- What types of activities or interactions do you offer to stimulate infant development?
- How do you comfort and soothe infants who are upset?
- Do you use music, books, or sensory toys with infants?
- How do you handle developmental delays or concerns?
- How do you accommodate allergies or special dietary needs for infants?
- Do you allow personal items like pacifiers, lovies, or specific blankets for comfort?
- Can you provide references from parents who have had infants in your care?

QUESTIONS TO ASK A CHILD CARE PROVIDER

Preschool Age Care

- What does a typical day look like for preschoolers?
- How much time is spent on structured activities versus free play?
- What types of educational activities do you provide?
- Do you follow a specific curriculum, and how does it support kindergarten readiness?
- How do you encourage social skills like sharing, cooperation, and taking turns?
- What is your approach to helping children manage their emotions and conflicts?
- What is your staff-to-child ratio for preschool-aged children?
- How do you support children who may have developmental delays or special needs?
- What types of materials and resources do you provide for learning (e.g., books, art supplies, puzzles)?
- How do you help children build problem-solving and critical thinking skills?
- What is your discipline policy?
- How do you handle behavioral challenges or difficult transitions?
- Do you offer parent-teacher conferences or regular progress updates?
- How do you prepare children for the transition to kindergarten?
- Are there opportunities for cultural or diversity-based learning?
- Can you provide references from parents of preschool-aged children?

QUESTIONS TO ASK A CHILD CARE PROVIDER

School Age Care

- What does a typical day look like for school-age children?
- Do you provide care before and after school?
- How do you manage transportation to and from school?
- Do you offer care during school breaks, holidays, or teacher workdays?
- Do you provide dedicated time and space for children to complete homework?
- Is there staff available to help with homework or school projects?
- What types of activities do you provide for school-age children?
- How do you handle conflicts or behavioral issues among school-age children?
- How do you encourage cooperation and respect among peers?
- What is your staff-to-child ratio for school-age children?
- How do you accommodate children with different learning styles or developmental needs?
- How do you communicate with parents about their child's activities and behavior?
- Do you offer regular updates or progress reports?
- What is your policy for addressing parent concerns or feedback?
- Do you offer special programs or events for school-age children (e.g., field trips, summer camps)?
- Can you provide references from other families with school-age children?

KEY CONSIDERATIONS WHEN VISITING A CHILD CARE FACILITY

- **Welcoming Environment:** Does the space feel warm, inviting, and child-friendly?
- **Happy Children:** Are the children engaged, happy, and relaxed?
- **Positive Interactions:** Do the caregivers interact with the children in a caring, patient, and encouraging manner?
- **Clean Facilities:** Are the classrooms, play areas, and bathrooms clean and well-maintained?
- **Safety Measures:** Are there safety precautions like outlet covers, secure doors, gates, pool properly fenced?
- **Childproofing:** Are hazardous items out of children's reach (e.g., cleaning supplies, sharp objects)?
- **Emergency Preparedness:** Is there a visible fire extinguisher, first aid kit, and emergency exit plan?
- **Staff-to-Child Ratio:** Does the number of caregivers match or exceed required ratios for the age group?
- **Organized Play Areas:** Are play spaces well-organized with accessible toys and materials?
- **Outdoor Space:** Is there a safe, fenced outdoor play area with appropriate equipment?
- **Engaging Activities:** Are there stimulating and age-appropriate activities available (e.g., arts, music, reading)?
- **Variety:** Is there a mix of structured activities and free play?
- **Daily Schedule:** Is there a clear, predictable routine that balances active and quiet times?
- **Warm and Professional:** Are staff members welcoming and open to answering your questions?
- **Communication:** Do staff provide clear explanations about their policies, schedules, and practices?
- **Attentiveness:** Do caregivers seem genuinely interested in the well-being of the children?
- **Social Interaction:** Do children interact positively with each other and caregivers?

A PARENT'S ROLE

Advocate for the Child's Needs

- Understand and prioritize your child unique needs.

Define Priorities and Expectations

- Identify what is most important for your family.

Research Child Care Options

- Explore various types of child care and reach out to Resource and Referral as well as family and friends.

Evaluate Programs and Providers

- Observe the environment and interact with staff.

Trust Instincts

- Assess whether the environment feels safe, welcoming, and nurturing.
- Evaluate how well the program aligns with your values and parenting style.
- Pay attention to how your child reacts to the caregivers and setting.

CHILD CARE REFERRALS

The Resource and Referral program provides information about child care services available in Placer County but does not offer specific recommendations. Families receive guidance to help them select a quality early care and education program that aligns with their needs and the needs of their child, while prioritizing parental choice. The final decision rests with the parents, as they are best equipped to determine the child care that suits their unique family circumstances. It is important to note that PCOE Early Childhood Education (ECE) has not inspected nor does not endorse the condition of any provider's facility or the quality of supervision offered. Additionally, PCOE ECE Resource and Referral is not responsible for any agreements or arrangements made between parents and child care providers.

Referrals are provided to both licensed providers and license-exempt programs, as long as they meet the requirements set by the Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing, and California's Health and Safety Code. Referrals to unlicensed child care programs are made only when licensing is not legally required. Examples of such programs include parent cooperatives, recreation programs, and community-based programs.

Child Care Referrals can be accessed between the hours of 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday:

Telephone: 530.745.1380

Walk-in: PCOE ECE, 1400 W Stanford Ranch Rd, Rocklin 95765

Online: 24 hours, 7 days a week at www.placercoe.org

TRUSTLINE

What is TrustLine?

TrustLine is the California registry of licensed exempt child care providers who have passed background screening. All caregivers listed with TrustLine have been cleared through a fingerprint check of records at the California Department of Justice. This means they have no disqualifying criminal convictions or substantiated child abuse reports in California.

The TrustLine Registry is maintained by the California Resource and Referral Network. Just call TrustLine at: 800.822.8490 to obtain a one-page application and send it in with a set of fingerprints and a one-time only fee. If no disqualifying criminal convictions or substantiated child abuse reports are found, your name will be added to the registry. For more information visit the TrustLine website at: www.trustline.org.



PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

PCOE Early Childhood Education (ECE) is home to multiple programs providing quality early care and education services to young children, their families, child care providers, and the Placer County community. Programs and services within ECE include:

- **Behavior Support:** Coaching and consultation services to children, teachers, providers, and parents who are struggling with challenging behavior.
- **Business Start-up Workshops:** Assistance for new licensed child care providers.
- **Centralized Eligibility List (CEL):** Centralized database for income-eligible parents of children birth to age 12 who are seeking subsidized preschool or child care in Placer County.
- **Child Care Food Program:** Nutritious meals and snacks for children.
- **Child Care Initiative Project:** Recruiting and training childcare providers.
- **Child Care Alternative Payment Program:** CalWORKs/Alternative Payment (AP) provides financial assistance in paying for child care to income-qualified families who reside in Placer County.
- **Child Development Associate (CDA):** Provide classes and support to assist private child care providers with CDA Certificates.
- **Child Development Permit Orientation:** Commission on Teacher Credentialing requirements information for early educators.
- **Early Learning Lab Schools:** In collaboration with Sierra College, provides experience and mentoring for student teachers.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- **Early Learning Resource:** Child care and early learning resources for the community.
- **Early Childhood Wellness Team:** Provides behavior and mental health support through direct services to child care providers, caregivers, and families.
- **Early Math Initiative:** Children’s mathematics and science learning in the context of high-quality professional learning.
- **Family Child Care Home Education Network (FCCHEN):** Early care and education for children and coaching and support for private in-home childcare providers.
- **Family Engagement/Parent Cafes:** A collaborative, strength-based process engaging professionals and families in relationship-building.
- **Family, Friend, and Neighbors:** Materials, mentoring, home visits, and support for informal caregivers.
- **First 5 Placer Children and Families Commission:** Administrative support and staffing.
- **Foster Bridge Program:** Provides emergency childcare vouchers and assistance accessing childcare providers for foster children.
- **Head Start/Early Head Start:** In collaboration with the Placer Community Action Council (PCAC), comprehensive school readiness and family support services to low-income children and families.
- **Health & Safety Scholarships:** Reimburses early educators for CPR/First Aid mandated health & safety training.
- **Kids Day Community Events:** Provide child activities and parent information at children’s Health and Safety Fairs for the community.
- **Licensing Orientations:** Help child care providers prepare to be licensed by the State.

PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

- **Newsletter:** Quarterly publication with child development information and resources for parents and childcare providers.
- **Online Child Care Referrals:** Referrals to Placer County Child care Providers 24/7.
- **Placer County Childcare Council:** Plans for child care services and addresses the child care needs of families in Placer County.
- **Preschool Support for Districts:** School district technical assistance for operating preschool programs.
- **Professional Development for Early Educators:** Workshops, coaching, mentoring, access to higher education and certifications for early educators.
- **Quality Counts California/Quality Rating and Improvement System:** Assessing and communicating the level of quality in early care and education programs in Placer County.
- **Quality Counts California/Workforce Pathways:** Supports current teachers/educators to move forward on the teacher permit matrix and career path.
- **Read by Grade 3:** Training and early literacy activities in English and Spanish for parents and early educators.
- **Resource and Referral:** Child care referrals for families; support, training, and resources for childcare providers.
- **State Preschool:** Part-day school readiness program for income-eligible children and children with disabilities.



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