

WORK-LIFE SERIES

Child Care



Scenario:

Client Name: Erica Angaiak

Age: 31

Location: Fairbanks, AK

Member (Employee): Erica Angaiak

Ms. Angaiak's son, John, will be turning three in June. Even though Ms. Angaiak's mother takes care of John now, Ms. Angaiak would like to learn more about preschool options in her area. She is interested in home daycares as well as daycare centers. She mentioned this to her supervisor at work, who advised that Ms. Angaiak call ComPsych® GuidanceResources for referrals and other resources. Ms. Angaiak is hoping to start with a part-time schedule for John and gradually move to full-time preschool. She hopes to enroll her child by the end of August.

ComPsych Approach:

The ComPsych approach would begin with an assessment by one of our master's- or PhD-level GuidanceConsultantsSM, which would identify a number of needs for the Ms. Angaiak and her family. The GuidanceConsultant would immediately open a FamilySource® case for child care resources. A FamilySource Childcare Specialist would research referrals, compile local resources, and assemble and send a packet within 3 business days. This would include:

- A thorough review of center-based and home-based preschool programs in the Fairbanks area;
- Details on pricing, program information, location, state mandated child care regulations;
- HelpSheetsSM, Suggested Reading, and any additional resources that may aid the parents in making an informed decision regarding their child care options.

The GuidanceConsultant would also link Ms. Angaiak to GuidanceResources® Online, ComPsych's work-life website, where she could browse for additional resources on childcare and parenting. Finally, the GuidanceConsultant would remind Ms. Angaiak that resources & referrals services are unlimited, so she is welcome to call back anytime with further requests.

CHILD CARE SAMPLE

Dear Ms. Angaiak,

Thank you for contacting the ComPsych GuidanceResources® program. The following are a number of resources that I hope will be helpful to you.

The information was current at the time I compiled the research, but it may change at any time. This packet is meant for use as a guide to assist you in making an informed decision and should not be treated as any form of advice. Please note that the referrals listed are not in any way endorsed or licensed by ComPsych. ComPsych does not control and is not responsible for the quality of services rendered by such programs nor does ComPsych review or monitor their activities.

Additionally, use of any programs listed herein indicates your understanding and acceptance of the following: (1) ComPsych does not assume any liability with regard to the services performed by any program listed herein; and (2) you agree to release and hold harmless ComPsych from any and all liability with respect to such programs.

Again, thank you for your inquiry. If at any time you have further questions regarding our services, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

Katherine DiRe
Childcare Specialist

Child Care Provider Referrals

Note: I have included information on five child care providers that anticipate space for your child by the end of August. Additionally, I have compiled information on Alaska’s state rules and regulations for child care, as well as details on the state subsidy program. If there are any questions or concerns that arise as you are going through the information, please do not hesitate to reach out.

(1)

Name:	Fairbanks Montessori School
Address:	2014 30th Avenue, Fairbanks, AK 99701
Phone Number:	(907) 451-8485
Website:	https://www.fairbanksmontessori.org/
Contact:	Sarah, Riley
Facility Type:	Daycare Center
Age Accepted:	19 months – 6 years
Hours of Operation:	M-F 7:30am – 5:30pm* *This daycare also offers partial-week schedules
Weekly Fees:	Full Day 9:00am-4:00pm \$885/month Morning 9:00am-1:00pm \$665/month Afternoon 1:00pm-4:00pm \$499/month
Registration Fee:	\$100 registration fee \$200 supply fee
Program Information:	Established in 1965, Fairbanks Montessori School is a private pre-school, kindergarten, and toddler program serving approximately 120 children, ages ranging from 19 months through 6 years. As a non-profit organization dedicated to early childhood education, it is our mission “to give each child a chance to maximize his or her own potential.” Through self-directed, Montessori-developed activities, in a climate of mutual trust and respect, we provide children with an environment that stimulates social, emotional, physical, and cognitive growth. Our goal is that each child leaves our school with a strong sense of self-worth, an abiding love of learning, a respect for themselves and others, and a healthy independence of action and thought.
Activities List:	Art, Music, Drama, Dance, Free Play, Outside Play, Exercise, Hands on Learning, Circle Time, Reading / Story Time, Language Development
Additional Information:	This daycare center anticipates availability for your child by August. Please call for more information or to schedule an appointment to interview.

(2)

Name:	Moosing Around Childcare
Address:	1325 22nd Ave, Fairbanks, AK 99709
Phone Number:	(907) 750-7918
Website:	https://childcarecenter.us/provider_detail/moosing-around-fairbanks-ak https://www.facebook.com/akmoosingaround/
Contact:	Sarah
Facility Type:	Home Daycare
Age Accepted:	6 weeks – 5 years
Hours of Operation:	M-F 6:30am – 10:00pm Sat 8:00am – 6:00pm
Weekly Fees:	Varies based on schedule needed.
Registration Fee:	Currently waived
Program Information:	Moosing Around is a nature based preschool and childcare utilizing the great outdoors in early learning and development. Waldorf and Reggio inspired hands on activities will encourage children to love to learn from nature.
Activities List:	Art, Music, Drama, Dance, Free Play, Outside Play, Exercise, Hands on Learning, Circle Time, Reading / Story Time, Language Development
Additional Information:	This home provider anticipates space for your child in August, as two children will be going to Kindergarten. Please call for more information or to schedule an appointment to interview.

(3)

Name:	Nicole's Daycare
Address:	606 Wainwright Rd, Fairbanks, AK 99701
Phone Number:	(907) 374-1617
Contact:	Nicole
Facility Type:	Family Provider
Age Accepted:	6 weeks – 12 years
Hours of Operation:	M-F 6:00am – 6:00pm
Weekly Fees:	This provider offers care on a sliding scale. Please call for more information.
Registration Fee:	See above.
Activities List:	Art, Music, Drama, Dance, Free Play, Outside Play, Exercise, Hands on Learning, Circle Time, Reading / Story Time, Language Development
Additional Information:	This home provider currently has space for your child in August. Nicole asked that you call her to set up an interview so you can discuss pricing and secure your child's space.

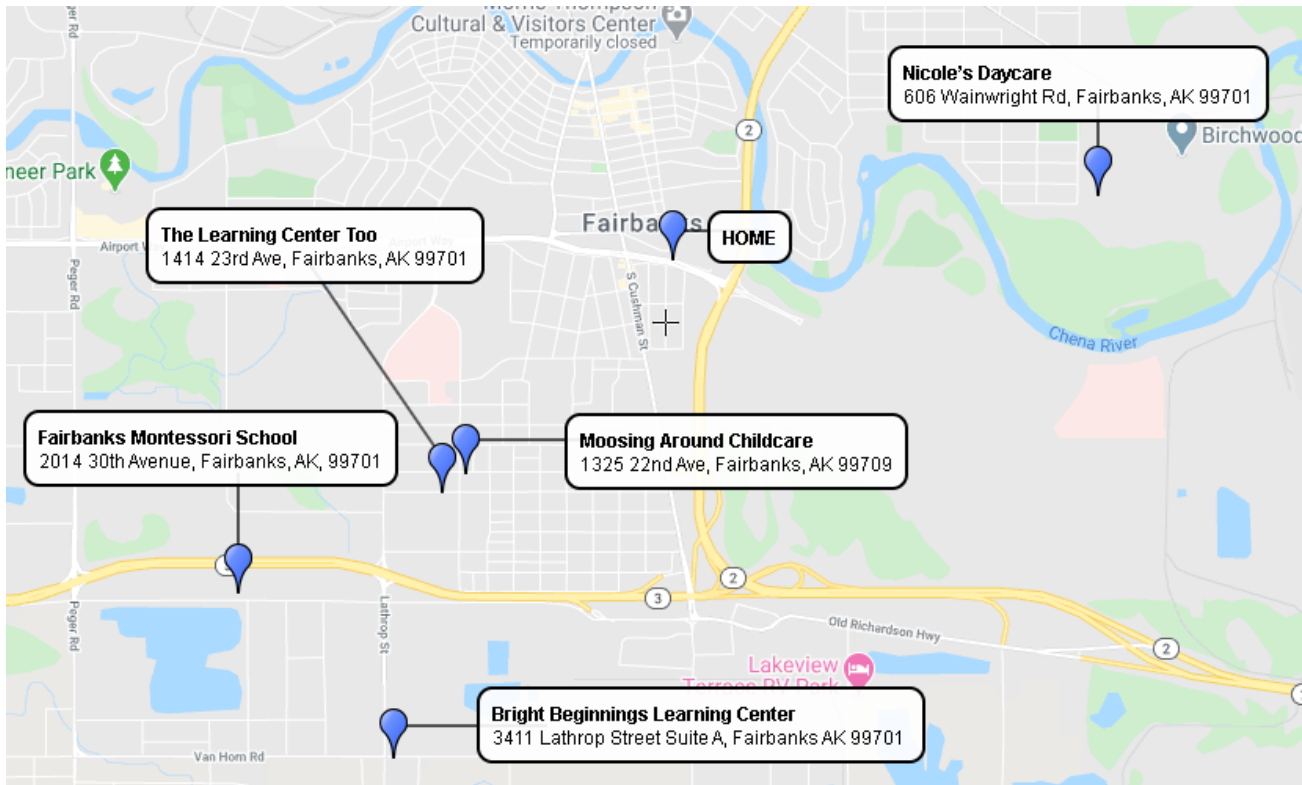
(4)

Name:	Bright Beginnings Learning Center
Address:	3411 Lathrop Street Suite A, Fairbanks AK 99701
Phone Number:	(907) 456-2263
Website:	https://www.facebook.com/Gymnastics-Inc-Bright-Beginnings-Learning-Center-650500941657275/
Contact:	Laura
Facility Type:	Daycare Center
Age Accepted:	3 years – 5 years
Hours of Operation:	M-F 8:00am - 6:00pm
Weekly Fees:	The preschool program offers a variety of schedules including part-day and part-week options.
Registration Fee:	\$75
Program Information:	Bright Beginnings Learning Center's philosophy is to teach the whole child: cognitively, physically, emotionally and socially in a nurturing, fun and safe environment. Children and teacher will interact through a learn/play partnership. Activities are designed to promote a combination of teacher-directed and child-imitated interactions. Children learn through many different avenues: visual, auditory, tactile, kinesthetic, etc. Hence, all activities will incorporate as many senses as possible allowing for all styles of learning. Using a variety of presentation styles will allow children to receive repetition of information without seeming redundant.
Activities List:	Art, Music, Drama, Dance, Free Play, Outside Play, Exercise, Hands on Learning, Circle Time, Reading / Story Time, Language Development
Additional Information:	This home provider anticipates space for your child in August, as two children will be going to Kindergarten. Please call for more information or to schedule an appointment to interview.

(5)

Name:	The Learning Center Too
Address:	1414 23rd Ave, Fairbanks, AK 99701
Phone Number:	(907) 458-6464
Website:	https://www.facebook.com/THELEARNINGCENTERAK/
Contact:	Any Staff Member
Facility Type:	Daycare Center
Accreditation:	NAEYC
Age Accepted:	6 weeks – 12 years
Hours of Operation:	M-F 6:30am – 6:00pm
Weekly Fees:	Varies based on schedule; this provider offers four- and five- day childcare. By august, they might have a three-day opening.
Registration Fee:	\$50
Program Information:	The Learning Center is a NAEYC Accredited early education and school age program. We serve the employees of Foundation Health Partners which is comprised of Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, Denali Center and Tanana Valley Clinic.
Activities List:	Art, Music, Drama, Dance, Free Play, Outside Play, Exercise, Hands on Learning, Circle Time, Reading / Story Time, Language Development
Additional Information:	This home provider currently has openings for your children. Please call for more information or to schedule an appointment to interview.

Map of Referrals



Child Care State Rules and Regulations

Alaska Child Care Licensing Agency

Alaska Department of Health & Social Services

Division of Public Assistance

Child Care Program Office

619 East Shipcreek Avenue, Suite 230

Anchorage, AK 99501

Phone: (907) 269-4500

Toll Free: (888) 268-4632 (within State)

Fax: (907) 269-1064

Website: <http://www.daycare.com/alaska/>

From the website:

Worker Qualifications

Caregivers having regular contact with children: At least 18 years old, although 14 - 17 year-olds may serve as caregivers if they have completed a child care training course or have demonstrated competency to satisfaction of administrator.

Becoming an Approved Child Care Provider

An approved provider provides child care services to child care assistance-eligible children in a private residence as the sole caregiver. Approved providers must become licensed within one year to continue receiving child care assistance payments. An approved relative provider provides child care services only to child care assistance-eligible children who are their grandchild, great grandchild, sibling, niece, or nephew. Approved relative providers must renew their status every two years.

To participate in the child care assistance program as an approved provider or an approved relative provider, you must:

- Submit a completed application;
- Agree to meet basic health and safety requirements;
- Pass a criminal history background check (also any household member 18 years of age and older)

Approved and approved relative providers may care for no more than a total of five children under 12 years of age, including their own children. Of those five children:

- No more than four children may be unrelated to the provider; and
- No more than two children may be under 30 months of age.
- If you reside outside the Municipality of Anchorage, contact your local child care assistance program administrator/
- If you reside within the Municipality of Anchorage, contact the Child Care Program Office

What is In-Home Care?

Care is considered "in-home care" when it is provided in the child's own home.

An in-home child care provider is an individual who provides child care services in the child's own home.

What Do I Need to Know?

- In-home care is affected by interaction with other laws and regulations in addition to Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) regulations.
- If you have your child care provider come into your home to provide child care, you are considered their employer.

SAMPLE

Contact us anytime for confidential assistance.

Who Qualifies to be an In-Home Provider?

To receive payments through the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), an in-home provider must:

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Be employed by the parent(s) of the family
- Pass a criminal history background check
- Provide care only to the CCAP-eligible children residing in the family's home

What is the Process?

If you choose to hire a child care provider to care for your own children in your own home, please contact your local child care assistance program office.

Provider/Child Ratio

Age Range	Ratios for Daycare in Alaska
Age of Children	Child- Teacher: Maximum Group Size, Ratio of Children to Caregivers
Through 18 months	5 - 1 (10:2) - Term for Child's Age Group: Infants
19 to 36 months	6 - 1 (12:2) - Term for Child's Age Group: Toddlers
3 and 4 years	10 - 1 (20:2) - Term for Child's Age Group: Preschoolers
5 and 6 years	14 - 1 (28:2) - Term for Child's Age Group: Kindergartners
7 through 12 years	18 - 1 (36:2) - Term for Child's Age Group: School

Child-to-Caregiver Ratios
<p>(a) Except as provided in (f) of this section, a child care home must have at least one caregiver, and may provide care for no more than a total of eight children under age 13 years, including the caregiver's children under age 12 years. Of the total children in care, no more than three children may be under the age of 30 months. Of the total children in care, including children under the age of 30 months, no more than two may be nonambulatory.</p> <p>(b) Except as provided in (c) and (f) of this section, a child care group home must have at least two caregivers and may provide care for no more than a total of 12 children under age 13 years. Of the total children in care, no more than five may be under the age of 30 months, and no more than four may be nonambulatory.</p> <p>(c) A child care group home requires only one caregiver if</p> <p>(1) the number of children decreases to no more than a total of eight and the requirements of (a) of this section are met; or</p> <p>(2) the caregiver has completed one year of licensed home child care or the equivalent, or meets the college credit, CDA credential, or Montessori credential requirements of 7 AAC 57.300(d), and there are no more than a total of</p> <p>(A) 10 children, with no children under the age of 30 months; or</p> <p>(B) 12 children who are all school age.</p>
<p>Except as provided in (e) and (f) of this section, a child care center shall maintain, during all hours of operation, the following child-to-caregiver ratio and the following maximum group size as required by 7 AAC 57.510</p>
<p>(e) A child care center may maintain a child-to-caregiver ratio consistent with the age of the majority of the children, when kindergartners and school-age children are in a mixed age group. When infants, toddlers, and preschoolers are in a mixed age group, the child-to-caregiver ratio for the youngest child applies.</p> <p>(f) For purposes of meeting the child-to-caregiver ratio requirements in (a) - (d) of this section, a child in care who is age 13 or older must be counted as a child under age 13 who is school age.</p>

(g) In this section,
(1) "nonambulatory" means not physically or mentally capable of achieving mobility to exit a building without the aid of another individual;
(2) "total" means the total number of children in care at any time.

Child Care Subsidy Information

Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

Division of Public Assistance

Child Care Programs Office

Toll Free: 888-268-4632

Website: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dpa/Pages/ccare/default.aspx>

Information for Families: Child Care Assistance Program





The Child Care Assistance Program provides assistance with child care expenses for eligible families who are working or participating in an education or training program.

Child Care Assistance in Alaska is known as “Parents Achieving Self Sufficiency” (PASS) and is divided into three categories; PASS I, PASS II, and PASS III.

[The PASS I program](#) provides child care assistance for families receiving benefits under the Alaska Temporary Assistance Program.


[The PASS II program](#) provides child care assistance for families who are transitioning from the Alaska Temporary Assistance Program.

[The PASS III program](#) provides child care assistance for families who are not eligible for, or who have never received, PASS I or PASS II.

-  [Child Care Assistance Service Delivery Areas Map](#)
- [Online Child Care Contribution Calculator](#)
-  [PASS II & PASS III Child Care Assistance Brochure](#)
-  [PASS I Child Care Assistance Brochure](#)
-  [CC08 - Child Care Assistance Application](#)
- [Child Care Assistance Offices](#)

Alaska Inclusive Child Care Program (Alaska IN! for Special Needs Child Care)

[The Alaska Inclusive Child Care Program \(Alaska IN!\)](#) is an enhanced referral and supplemental subsidy program for children with special needs.

-  [Alaska Inclusive Child Care Program \(Alaska IN!\) Brochure](#)
-  [CC48 - Application for Alaska Inclusive Child Care](#)

Alaska's Early Intervention Infant Learning Program - Developmental Screenings

The early years of a child's life are the most important. From ages birth to 3, rapid learning and brain development takes place. Some children need a little extra help to develop certain skills. Alaska's Early Intervention Infant Learning Program (EI/ILP) is a program that provides specialized services for children who have developmental delays and/or disabilities. The services are for children birth to 3 years and will provide extra help for your child's development. If you are concerned that your child may have a developmental delay, or know of a child with a disability, please visit the [Alaska's Early Intervention Infant Learning Program website](#) for more information about the referral process.

Types of Child Care Providers

If you participate in the PASS programs, you may select your child care provider. However, only eligible providers may be paid with public funds through the PASS Child Care Assistance Programs. To learn more about eligible provider types, please visit our [Information for Providers page](#).

Child Care Resource and Referral

The Statewide Alaska Child Care Resource & Referral Network, **thread**, supports families through the active operation of a child care referral and consumer education service. These services are offered free of charge to families that participate in the Child Care Assistance Program.

If you are unsure about what to look for in a quality child care program, **thread**, can help! Visit www.threadalaska.org for more information.

Choosing a Preschool

Before you know it, your toddler will be old enough to begin kindergarten and enter elementary school. You can help properly prepare your child by enrolling him or her in a quality preschool program that fosters healthy social interaction with adults and other children. Give your child the right head start by researching preschools carefully and staying involved after enrollment.

The Importance of Preschool

There is no other time later in life that your child will be able to learn and absorb as much as right now. Studies such as the 1996 Carnegie Foundation report show that a quality preschool experience helps a child develop the necessary skills to achieve in school and in life. Preschool is designed to stimulate creativity, excite interest in learning new concepts and introduce children to different social situations. A good preschool program should introduce your child to the basics that he or she will learn more about in kindergarten and elementary school: reading, the alphabet, counting, shapes and sizes, colors, textures, names and animals.

You can make the transition to preschool easier by working closely with your child, reading to him or her every day, expanding the vocabulary by introducing new words, challenging the mind by asking questions and exposing your child to other children and adults.

Searching for a Preschool

Every preschool program is somewhat unique in its approach. However, educators and child psychologists recommend parents look for a preschool that:

- Provides an environment conducive to learning, exploring and socializing with other kids.
- Incorporates structured, independent and small group-learning sessions; spontaneous play time; quiet and rest time; outdoor activities and games; group reading periods; arts and crafts; and creative projects.
- Has at least one adult for every seven to 10 kids and no more than 16 3-year-olds per two adults. Most preschools have class sizes between 10 and 16 children, with two teachers present.
- Has a variety of resources, including toys, books, desks and an outside playground.
- Encourages independent play and creative expression.
- Promotes cultural diversity and parental involvement.
- Meets health and safety standards.
- Is located nearby and operates at times convenient to your schedule. You will want to be close by and available in case your child needs you.

Preschool programs are operated by many different institutions and organizations including:

- Public schools
- Private and independent schools
- Child-care or day-care centers (with a preschool curriculum incorporated in their programs)
- Churches
- Non-profit groups (e.g., the United Way)
- Companies and franchise chains
- The federal or state government's Head Start program

Days and hours of operation for preschools will vary. Be sure to visit several and sit in on actual classes to get a feel for how different programs operate.

Consider asking friends, relatives and neighbors for recommendations if they have used a preschool in your area. Other organizations, including your Employee Assistance Program (EAP), can help you research preschools and provide more information to help guide your decision.

Resources

- U.S. Department of Education: www.ed.gov
- American Academy of Pediatrics: www.aap.org
- National Education Association: www.nea.org
- National PTA: www.pta.org

Preschool Checklist

There are a variety of questions you should ask and topics to investigate when you are looking at preschools for your child. Below are some sample questions you might want to ask when conducting your search.

General

- How old is your preschool and what is its history?
- What is your school's philosophy or approach to education?
- Is the school accredited (e.g., by the National Association for the Education of Young Children)? Is the school's state license up to date?
- What guidelines does your preschool follow?
- What are the hours and days of operation?
- What are the tuition costs? Are any other fees required (e.g., registration fees, late fees for not picking up a child punctually)?
- What financial-aid opportunities and payment plans exist?
- Who heads the school? Who determines the curriculum?
- Has the school ever been cited for a violation of any kind?
- Have any serious accidents or injuries occurred?
- Has the school ever been sued?

Staff

- What type of training and background is required of staff (e.g., are they certified in early-childhood education)?
- How are staff members screened in the hiring process?
- Are adult staff members trained in first aid and CPR?
- What is the rate of pay and turnover of staff members in the last three years?

Approach to Learning and Child Care

- How many students are in each class?
- What is the age range of children in each preschool class?
- How are children grouped (e.g., by age)?
- What is the student-teacher ratio?
- How many adult staffers will interact with my child during an average day?
- What is an average day like?
- What is the balance between structured learning and independent play?
- What are the disciplinary approaches used and how are conflicts handled?
- How is toilet training handled?
- How is separation anxiety handled?

Skills and Activities

- What new skills can I expect my child to learn?
- What portion of the time is my child allowed to play freely?
- Is there a designated rest time and place, and is my child allowed to take a nap if he or she is tired?
- Are snacks provided by the preschool, or do I need to supply food for my child?

Resources

- U.S. Department of Education: www.ed.gov
- American Academy of Pediatrics: www.aap.org
- National Education Association: www.nea.org
- National PTA: www.pta.org

Helping Your Child Prepare for Preschool

Your three- or four-year-old child is maturing out of the toddler stage and demonstrating an affinity for learning new skills and experiencing fresh, fun challenges. Preschool should stimulate creativity, excite interest in learning new concepts and introduce your child to different social situations. You can make this transition to preschool easier by working closely with your child.

The Need for Preschool

At no time later in life will your child be able to learn and absorb as much as he or she can now. Recent educational research underscores the vital importance of early-learning programs to a child's overall development. It is no wonder that, in the last 20 years, the number of children attending preschool has mushroomed.

While children have the capacity to learn from every experience, each child needs individualized attention, hands-on activities and opportunities for social interaction to truly learn. A day care setting can entertain and occupy your child, but an educational preschool program can provide a stimulating environment to progress. However, before placing your child in a preschool you will want to be sure he or she is ready.

Required Reading

By this age, your child should develop a healthy curiosity about reading. Though he or she probably will not learn to read until kindergarten or first grade, you can help foster interest by regularly reading children's books to your child. Research shows that if you read to your child 20 minutes every day, he or she will begin school with 600 hours of experience; this will help your child become literate faster. This experience not only increases familiarity with words, letters, shapes, sizes, colors and animals, but also will boost attention span, making for a more patient, eager-to-learn preschooler.

Make reading a fun and regular routine: set up a story time each day, and read a bedtime book every night. Give your child a bookcase where he or she can shelve books and easily pick different ones. Increase variety and exposure to fresh stories and concepts by buying new children's books regularly. Be sure to purchase a few interactive books with sound-effect buttons and textures your preschooler can touch.

Experts recommend a dedicated approach to reading that involves more than simple recitation of the written word. While reading to your preschooler, try to:

- Promote interactivity. Ask questions that cause your child to think, such as, "Where is the dog hiding? Why is he hiding?" Ask your child if he or she has any questions. If your child is familiar with the story, ask him or her to "read" it to you.
- Sound enthusiastic. Show your child that you are interested in the characters and the story, too. Talk in character voices, and stress action occurring in the story by changing the volume and tone of your voice and expression.
- Read outside the lines. You do not always have to read word for word; instead, personalize the story to your child's situation by using his or her name or other familiar names. This builds excitement about reading and helps your child to internalize the story to his or her experiences.
- Teach beyond the story. Talk about colors, and quiz your child on geometric shapes (e.g., "Where is the circle?"). Point to and count the number of similar objects that appear on the page (e.g., "How many birds are there? One, two, three.").
- Reinforce a moral. Discuss what happened in the tale and what lessons the characters learned.

Other Preschool Preparations

Though your child may need help from a preschool teacher, he or she should be potty trained before entering preschool. Your child should be familiar with basic hygiene: wiping, washing and drying hands, blowing his or her nose and covering the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing. Practice these steps at home, and talk to your child about the need to remember them at preschool.

- Teach basic safety rules to your child:

- Teach him or her how to be careful in the playground: around swings, seesaws and other areas. Caution your child not to run while inside the preschool building, especially with anything in his or her hand.
- Demonstrate how to look both ways before crossing the street. Explain why crossing guards are important.
- Stress that he or she should not talk to strangers or agree to go anywhere with one. Talk to your child about who can be trusted, such as the preschool staff, teachers, police officers and firefighters, and who not to trust, including strangers or strange animals.
- It may be hard for your child to remember, but work with your preschooler on memorizing his or her full name, your full name, your home phone number and address. Teach your child to recognize his or her name on a coat label. Make sure the label is inside the clothing, not outside where a stranger can see it.

Between the ages of three and four, your child also will be practicing dressing and undressing. Work on zipping and unzipping a jacket, putting on and taking off shoes and boots and snapping and buttoning outfits.

Be prepared for bouts of separation anxiety. Preschool may be the first time that your child is separated from you for regular, extended periods. It is natural for kids to become clingy, cranky and frightened when you drop them off and pick them up from preschool. Before starting preschool, practice being apart from your child for short, safe periods, and talk about why you need to leave your child at preschool and how you will come back to pick him or her up. Instead of focusing on the separation, emphasize all the fun activities, games and books he or she will enjoy at preschool.

Introduce your child to other children his or her age. Your child will be interacting with fellow preschoolers soon enough, so the more experience he or she has playing and socializing with other kids, the smoother the transition may be. Work on sharing possessions with others, being friendly and polite to other children, taking turns and demonstrating courtesy and respect to elders.

Relish this time spent with your young child. Before you know it, your child will be off to preschool and out of the house for regular hours of the day, learning new skills and participating in challenging activities. Commend him or her on every accomplishment, and encourage your child to never stop learning.

Preschool Pointers

- Stimulate your child's senses by taking him or her to petting zoos, interactive museum exhibits and kids' fun centers.
- Practice putting together children's puzzles and playing stimulating, age-appropriate interactive games.
- Introduce your child to arts and crafts. Practice finger painting, encourage doodling and drawing on sketch pads, and let your child experiment with markers and chalks.
- Begin practicing the alphabet and writing alphabet letters, without stressing perfection. Work on writing his or her first name.
- Monitor your child's television watching. Set limits on proper programming; stress educational shows and discourage valueless cartoon programs.
- Sing songs with your child. Buy an album of children's songs, and practice singing them together.
- Sign up for fun classes such as Tumbling with Tots or kids' events such as story time at your local library or public school. These prime your child for the loosely structured learning environment of preschool.
- Allow your child to earn more independence and responsibility. Teach him or her how to be responsible for picking up toys and putting trash in the wastebasket. Show how to do more things for himself or herself, such as pouring cereal. Be patient with mistakes and messes.

Resources

- U.S. Department of Education: www.ed.gov
- American Academy of Pediatrics: www.aap.org
- Child and Adolescent Mental Health, National Institute of Mental Health: <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/child-and-adolescent-mental-health/index.shtml>

Raising a Preschooler

Once a child gets past the "terrible twos" and masters potty training, every day he or she establishes independence a bit further. A new universe of discovery and learning awaits a child preparing for life outside of the home and inside the classroom.

During preschool years, a child will make new friends, better express his or her personality artistically and athletically, and continually amaze parents with newly gained knowledge and a sharp-as-a-whip memory.

Growing Up Fast

By preschool age, a child is able to run, climb, kick, hang, hop, somersault and throw more accurately.

He or she can eat with less mess, pour his or her own juice and put on and take off clothing.

While physical maturation is impressive, mental blossoming and personality growth is even more astounding. Every day is an opportunity to add new words to an evolving vocabulary, learn a new song on television and ask cleverly complex questions.

Preschool children make new friends and enjoying playing with other kids. His or her favorite word may still be no, but he or she also is remembering to say please and thank you on occasion.

A Preschooler's Place in the World

Preschoolers are still egocentric: until they reach the age of five, they consider themselves to be the center of the universe. Understanding and accepting another person's point of view and empathizing with that person's situation can be difficult.

All parents should teach their children to become more independent at this age. With newfound freedom and trust comes a stubbornness to give in to a parent's will and demands.

A preschool child wants to take control of his or her own life, yet really has no power: parents tell him or her when to go to bed, when to turn off the television, when to eat. Naturally, power struggles between parents and children will erupt.

At the same time, a preschooler is naturally inquisitive about the world and is quick to ask many questions such as:

- Where did I come from?
- Why do birds fly?
- Why does daddy or mommy have to go to work?
- Why do people kiss?
- Why is the sky blue?

Parents should be prepared to answer quite a few of tricky questions. The world is a big place to preschoolers, populated by big people, big houses, big trees, big animals and big cars. Big things beget big questions; encourage a child's curiosity.

Learning Through Fun

Preschoolers tend to learn best by performing hands-on activities, such as playing, pretending and experimenting.

Instead of playing alongside another child, they are now playing with them, building social skills and learning to share and collaborate. Because they cannot yet read, they also learn by listening to their parents tell them about the world. That is why it is imperative to read regularly to your child at this age.

As language and vocabulary matures, a child's imagination sets off running. Creating imaginary friends, boasting, spinning tall tales and telling exaggerated stories to other children and adults is common.

A preschool child still craves attention and enjoys getting a rise out of people with amazing accounts that solicit bigger responses. Though the tall tales usually do not work on parents, realize that a child simply is experimenting with how to

get your attention.

Managing Behavior

Yearning for more independence, attention and praise from their parents, preschoolers are still capable of whining, ignoring you out of protest and throwing temper tantrums.

A parent's role is to help guide a child's behavior: to teach more self-control by setting boundaries and limits that are safe yet non-stifling.

Children beginning to practice more self-restraint and learn that actions have consequences. When he or she disobeys rules or ignores requests, parents should not immediately go into punishing mode, which often does not solve the problem and may teach children to avoid getting caught. Instead, look to correct misbehavior by trying these disciplinary methods:

- Ignore small matters. If a preschooler is having an argument with other children, let them try to resolve it themselves. If it persists, ask the children how they can work it out together.
- Enforce time-outs. Escort the child to a designated private area, such as the corner of his or her bedroom, where he or she must sit. Set time limits per age (three minutes for a three-year-old, four minutes for a four-year-old, etc.).
- Stress responsibilities for actions. If a child draws on the wall, have him or her help clean it.
- Impose a brief ban on a favorite activity or privilege. Tell the child if he or she disobeys again, there will be no television for the rest of the week. Then, make sure you follow through.

Preparing for Preschool

As a child gets closer to age four, parents may consider sending him or her to a preschool in your area. Educators and child psychologists recommend a preschool that:

- Provides an environment conducive to learning, exploring and socializing with other children
- Lets your child work in small groups
- Includes loosely scheduled creative activities, such as group reading time, outdoor activities and arts-and-crafts projects (e.g., finger paints, clay, dress-up costumes)
- Has a variety of resources: toys, books, desks, outside playground, etc.
- Encourages independent play and creative expression

Before enrolling a child, take him or her for a tour. Get the child excited by talking about the activities. Continue reading to the child every day to prime him or her for story time. Practice finger dexterity through creative exercises at home, such as coloring with crayons, cutting with scissors, finger painting and tracing his or her hand.

Remember that it is hard for preschoolers to adjust to major changes. The jump to preschool will be a departure from your child's normal daily routine, a leap into the outside world that can seem scary at first.

Encourage new friendships: kids love to be with other kids. Reinforce that you will see your child later in the day.

Communicate regularly with the teacher about your child's progress. Plan a class observation.

Your preschooler is embarking on a new adventure of self-exploration and independence. Encourage discovery, and promote hands-on learning opportunities. Watching a child learn naturally about the world in the course of play and social interaction is a treasure for parents. Relish these times before your child enters school, and make the memories last.

Resources

- U.S. Department of Education: www.ed.gov
- American Academy of Pediatrics: www.aap.org
- National Education Association: www.nea.org
- National PTA: www.pta.org

Child Care Choices

Nearly 60 percent of families with young children use some form of child care while parents are at work. Knowing about the different types of child care, and their advantages and disadvantages, can help make the process of finding quality day care easier.

The most popular child care options include child care centers, family day care providers and in-home providers.

Read more to learn about the different types of child care to determine which type of care is best for your child. No matter which option you choose, you should talk to your child about the arrangement.

Your final decision should be nurturing to your child, supportive of his or her development and compatible with your lifestyle and checkbook. Trial and error may be necessary, but ultimately you can find an arrangement that meets the needs of you and your child.

Child Care Centers

This type of care includes:

- Day care centers
- Preschools
- Nursery schools
- Drop-in centers
- Head Start Programs

Centers care for groups of children, often more than 100, outside of the home.

Many child care centers are structured like school programs, grouping children by age, and some centers offer infant care. In general, few centers are open during evenings and weekends.

Advantages:

- Your child will be able to make friends and develop social skills by interacting with other children
- Centers are regulated and inspected
- Centers are usually open during normal business hours, although some offer early and late drop-off
- If your child's teacher is ill, the center will find a substitute
- Centers stress education and creative expression by providing structured learning environments that include fun activities, crafts and a variety of books and toys
- A center environment is similar to a school environment and can offer the social stimulation that will help an easier transition to kindergarten

Disadvantages:

- Your child may receive less individual attention in a large group
- Centers conform to set schedules and are not always flexible to your needs or hours
- Centers may have high employee turnover, making it tougher for your child to bond with a caregiver
- Your child may have several different caretakers

Family Day Care Providers

With a family day care provider, your child is cared for in the provider's home.

One or more adults provide care for a small number of children, from infants and toddlers up to school-aged kids. Many parents prefer the friendly, comfortable home-like atmosphere of family day care, especially for infants.

Advantages:

- Your child will spend the day in a relaxed, homey environment
- The group sizes are smaller so your child receives more individual attention
- Can be less expensive than private care options

- Usually licensed or regulated by the state
- Caregivers may be more flexible and able to accommodate you and your child's needs

Disadvantages:

- May be hard to find a replacement if the caregiver is absent
- Can be a less educational and stimulating setting
- Quality of care varies widely from home to home

In-home Providers

Some parents choose caregivers who come to the child's home. These caregivers include:

- Nannies or in-home caregivers: Some live in your home in exchange for a salary plus room and board. For others, your home is their daily workplace.
- Au pairs: These are usually young (age 18 to 24) women who come from overseas. An au pair agency makes the arrangements. Au pairs receive room and board and are paid stipends in exchange for child care. Because these young people are recruited with the promise of an American cultural experience, it is important that your expectations and their responsibilities are clear from the start. You also have the obligation to reasonably limit their hours so they have some time to experience American life.
- Babysitters: Neighborhood teens often are willing to provide child care on a regular basis. Because the interests and social lives of teens change frequently, it is important to consider backup care.

Sometimes one or two families on the block can share an in-home provider. Because you are technically hiring this person, you may be responsible for paying employment taxes and medical benefits. In-home caregivers are not licensed.

Advantages:

- One-on-one supervision of your child's activities
- No worrying about transporting your child or his or her adjustment to a new setting
- Caregivers can accommodate your requests and be flexible with your schedule

Disadvantages:

- Less interaction with other kids
- No structured academic or physical program
- May be hard to find a replacement if the caregiver is absent
- Typically more expensive

Other Types of Child Care

In addition to the types of child care listed above, many parents choose to use the following child care arrangements:

- Group day care. In between family and center day care, group day care involves bringing your child to a private home. Two or more adults provide care for up to 12 children instead of six or less. Because the group can be large, group day care often maintains a structured environment with scheduled activities and routines.
- After-school care. Usually located in public schools, churches, homes and day care centers, this type of before- or after-school day care arrangement is ideal for elementary school-aged children, who are more independent and responsible than younger kids. Often, these programs offer full-day services during the holidays and summer.
- Babysitting cooperatives. This short-term, occasional-care option is provided by a group of parents and adults who trade-off giving and receiving care for their children. Like a carpool, parents rotate babysitting duties. Babysitting cooperatives are usually free.
- Montessori school. These schools feature a structured, individualized approach to learning for toddlers through high school. Students work at their own pace with their own chosen materials, encouraging creativity and expression. A center must employ a Montessori-certified teacher for at least three to four hours each day. Some Montessori programs are exempt from licensing regulations, allowing them to operate with a lower ratio of adults to children.

Rights and Responsibilities

Take an active role in the child-care program by arriving early and asking questions. Be aware of your rights and obligations as a parent.

You have a right to question or discuss:

- Unsafe practices or poor hygiene that might affect your child
- Discipline, care and educational issues
- Anything that upsets your child
- Your child's daily activities and progress

You have a right to expect:

- Adherence to state rules and regulations regarding child care
- Safe, nurturing, high-quality care in a clean environment

You have a responsibility to encourage:

- Open communication
- Positive age-appropriate activities

You have a responsibility to respect the provider's:

- Time. Be punctual in picking up your child
- Policies. Know when child-care payments are due
- Opinions. They have usually had plenty of experience watching and raising children

You have a responsibility to watch for the following warning signs:

- Complaints or anxiety from your child
- A center that does not permit or encourage parents to drop in unexpectedly
- Children are without the immediate and direct supervision of an adult
- A caregiver who has been observed screaming, yelling, swearing, threatening, criticizing or making fun of any of the children
- A caregiver who is physically rough with the children
- The home or center is dirty or unsafe
- Your child or another child shows signs of repeated bruising or injuries that are unexplainable

You have a responsibility to your child to:

- Talk with them about the day care setting and caregivers
- Ask very specific questions about your child's day and the events of that day
- Listen carefully to what your child is saying
- Visit your child's day care provider or center at unexpected times of the day

Resources

- usa.gov: <https://www.usa.gov/child-care>
- National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies: www.naccrra.net
- American Red Cross: www.redcross.org

Child Care Providers Checklist

When it comes to providing care for children, many parents choose a smaller, more homey setting for their child. Family day care providers, nannies, au pairs and babysitters are all good options for a child's care.

Before meeting with a provider, consider screening the caregiver candidate carefully via telephone. This will allow you to weed out unattractive candidates while giving you time to prepare questions you might not think to ask in a face-to-face interview. The following is a sample list of questions that will offer insight into the person who may be caring for your child.

Background

- What is your child care experience, and how long have you been providing child care services?
- What is your formal training? Do you have a background in child development or education?
- Are you state licensed or registered? If so, for how long? Has your license ever been revoked? (Be aware that family day care providers should have a license; nannies and in-home providers are not licensed.)
- Have you ever been arrested for or convicted of a criminal violation of any kind?
- Do you have special training in infant/child CPR and first aid?
- What are your weaknesses and strengths?
- What are your goals in providing child care? Your long-term career goals?
- Do you have at least five references I can call?

Stipulations

- What hours and days are you available?
- What are your acceptance requirements? Do you accept all ages? Do you accept children with special needs?
- What are your fees, what is included with the fees and when are they due?
- If my child is absent for any reason, am I still charged?
- Do you charge a fee if I am late picking up my child?
- How would you handle an emergency, such as injury or fire?

Questions for Family Day Care Providers

- What would an average day's schedule be like for my child?
- How many children are cared for at a time, and what are your maximums and minimums?
- What are your disciplinary approaches and how are conflicts resolved?
- What is your procedure when children have ongoing discipline issues or pose a threat to the other children?
- What kind of television programming is shown, and how often?
- What type of food is provided and when?
- If care is in your home, describe the setting. What additions or renovations were done to make the home more child-friendly?
- Is there a designated rest time, and is my child allowed to take a nap if he or she is tired? What do the children sleep on?
- Will I be given any progress reports on my child, and will areas of concern regarding behaviors or conflicts be communicated to me?

Questions for a Nanny or Au Pair

- What were your last three jobs, and why did you leave each?
- Do you have any health problems?
- Are you available on a live-in or live-out basis?
- What is your location and availability, and when can you start?
- What are your salary and benefit requirements?
- Is your schedule flexible?
- Do you drive? What is your driving record like? What kind of car do you drive and how much insurance do you carry?

- Are you willing to run errands? Are you willing do light housework?

Skills and Activities

- What new skills can I expect my child to learn?
- What types of activities will you provide?
- Are there any field trips? How will my child be supervised? What is the mode of transportation?
- What facilities do you use for outdoor play? Is there a home or community playground nearby?

Questions to Ask a Provider's References

- How long was this provider with you? How many children were in his or her care?
- What are the child care provider's strengths and weaknesses?
- Does the provider communicate well with parents?
- Was the provider flexible with your schedule and attentive to your concerns?
- How is the child care provider at handling problems, discipline and enforcing rules?
- How did this person handle an emergency?
- Was the person reliable?
- Did this person take direction and criticism well?
- Would you choose this child care provider again?
- Do you recommend this provider?

Resources

- National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies: www.naccrra.org

Day Care Center Checklist

Before you enroll your child in a day care center, make an appointment to see the child-care facility in action to observe the caregivers and children. You will want to observe the environment to see if it is safe for your child and determine if the program is designed to enrich your child's development and growth. Be sure to bring your child along. Here are some things to observe and questions to ask the center director.

Facility Information and Policies

- What is the center's history, and how long has it been providing care?
- What are the center's goals and philosophies, and what guidelines are followed?
- Has the center ever been cited for a violation of any kind?
- What is the rate of employee turnover?
- What are the hours and days of operation?
- What are the fees, what is included with the fees and when are payments due?
- If my child is absent for any reason, am I still charged?
- Is a fee charged if I am late picking up my child?
- What are the acceptance requirements? Are all ages accepted? Are children with special needs accepted?
- Does the center keep a daily log that I can examine?
- Have any accidents or injuries occurred?
- What happens in the event of an emergency, such as injury or fire?
- What happens if my child is sick? What are the rules about bringing mildly ill children to day care?
- Are parents allowed to participate in caregiving? Can I visit the center anytime to observe my child? How can I get more involved?
- What are children allowed to bring or not bring?
- How often are the facilities, toys and equipment cleaned?
- Do you have at least five references I can call?
- Can you provide me with any written information describing program policies, health forms, payment contracts, fee schedules, sample menus, etc.?
- Is your center accredited by any national child care organization, such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)? (Be aware that only about 7,000 centers nationwide have NAEYC accreditation. Many excellent centers are not accredited, but those that are have completed a rigorous process.)

Staff Qualifications and Ratios

- What is the staff-to-child ratio?
- What formal training do staffers have?
- Do staffers have special training in infant/child CPR and first aid?
- Do staffers demonstrate patience, friendliness and a sense of humor to children?
- What are the qualifications for being a main teacher or an aide?
- How many different caregivers will be with my child during the day?
- How are staffers screened in the hiring process? Is a criminal background check completed?
- What is the pay range for staff, and how does it compare to other local centers?
- What is the turnover rate?

Philosophy of Care

- How many children are cared for at one time, and what are the maximum limits?
- Can you give me a chronology of an average day, such as what events and activities will occur?
- Do the children appear comfortable, happy and relaxed?
- How are classes structured: by age, ability?
- What are the disciplinary approaches used, and how are conflicts handled?
- How are chronic discipline issues addressed?

- If television is allowed, what kind and how often?
- What type of food is provided and when?
- Is there a designated rest time, and is my child allowed to nap if he or she is tired? What do the children sleep on?
- How often will I be given progress reports on my child, and will areas of concern regarding behaviors or conflicts be communicated to me?

Skills and Activities

- What is the schedule of activities?
- What new skills can my child expect to learn?
- What is the balance between structured and independent learning?
- Are there any field trips? How will my child be supervised? What is the mode of transportation?
- What activities are available for children to do independently? Are there designated areas for group vs. independent play?
- Do children participate in reading and music to aid in speech and cognitive development?

Questions about Infants/Toddlers

- Describe the type of activities or stimulation children receive.
- Are records kept on diapering, eating and sleeping?
- Is food provided, or do I bring it? Can I see a weekly menu?
- Are diapers provided?
- How is toilet training handled?
- How often are children brought outdoors?
- How long are children kept in cribs or playpens while awake?
- How is separation anxiety handled?

Questions about Children with Special Needs

- How many children with special needs are currently enrolled or have been cared for in the past?
- What training do staff members receive in caring for the special needs of some children?
- How large are the groups? Are children with special needs integrated into the mainstream classrooms?
- What type of special attention will my child receive?
- What are the planned activities? Can you include activities recommended by my child's doctor or therapist?
- Do you have special equipment for my child?
- Are any support services available (e.g., occupational therapists, speech pathologists)?

Resources

- National Association for the Education of Young Children - Accredited Program
Search: www.rightchoiceforkids.org/accredited_program_search
- American Academy of Pediatrics: www.healthychildren.org

Preparing Your Child for the First Day of Preschool

When it is time for your child to venture out into the big world and begin a new life of learning, it is important to be properly prepared. Starting preschool or a day-care educational program may seem a little intimidating to your child at first, especially knowing you will not be there with him or her in class. Make this transition easier by talking to your child about what to expect and introducing him or her to the preschool environment ahead of time.

Preparing for Preschool

The big day is approaching: your child is about to make the jump from home to school for the first time. Prepare your child by trying these suggestions:

- **Talk about school.** Bring it up early and often in a positive context. Get your child excited by telling him or her about all the fun, playful activities: group reading, drawing, coloring, cutting and pasting, painting, playground games, puppet shows, singing and dancing (determine which activities your program offers beforehand). Talk about all the new friends your child will make and all the new skills your child will learn. Be sure to use enthusiasm and excitement in your voice and body expressions, and avoid talking about school negatively or as a punishment. Your attitude toward going to work also can influence how your child feels about school. If you talk positively about your going to your job, your child is more likely to have a positive attitude about school.
- **Answer your child's questions.** Encourage your child to ask you (or, eventually, the teacher) any questions her or she may have. If your child does not ask, tell him or her why attending preschool is important, and relate your happy experiences of preschool and what you learned. Be honest with your child about what to expect, too: that preschool is just for kids, not parents, meaning you will not be able to be in class with him or her.
- **Acquaint your child with the environment.** Try to visit the preschool building and classroom ahead of time and briefly observe a class in progress together. Arrange for the two of you to meet the preschool teachers before the first day. Talk with your child about what he or she saw and felt about the preschool after your visit. Read your child children's books with a preschool theme.
- **Try to meet a friend first.** Find out whether any of your child's friends will be attending the preschool. This is a great way to get him or her excited about class. If not, talk with the preschool teacher about the possibility of contacting a parent in your area who will be sending his or her child to the school, and arrange for your kids to meet before the first day.

The Days Before School Starts

- **Make the days before school relaxing ones.** Your child may naturally feel a little apprehensive a few days before preschool begins. Try not to pack these days with too many activities, such as a long road trip or abrupt return from a vacation. Break in new bedtime rules and times at least a few days before the first day of school.
- **Prepare yourself.** Chances are you will be a bit sad to see your child go and he or she will be upset knowing you will not be around. Prepare him or her by explaining exactly what will happen on the first day of school. Prepare yourself by looking to the positive growth experiences your child will encounter.

The First Day of School

- **Your child may be upset and clingy on the first day of class.** These are natural, common coping mechanisms and should not receive a scolding. Instead, keep goodbyes simple. Reassure your child that you will be back later to pick up him or her, give a big hug and a kiss and say goodbye. Try not to express sadness or guilt.
- **Talk with the teacher about a transition** in which you both can take your child's hand and lead him or her to a favorite activity. Then, leave. It is tough at first, but will help set a routine that is best for both you and your child.
- **Do not try to sneak out.** This could frighten your child.

Notes