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# How to Choose Family Child Care and Group Family Child Care

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As you think about child care, make visits, ask questions, then decide. Taking the time and energy to choose the right setting for your family's needs is a necessary part of selecting a loving environment for your child.

Our referral gives you somewhere to start, but the responsibility for your child's safety and well being is yours. Group size, child/adult ratio, caregiver experience, training and education, facility safety, program accreditation, and family involvement are some of the quality indicators you might consider in choosing a child care provider. Ask plenty of questions and make sure you are comfortable with the provider before making your final decision.

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## How many children and adults might I see in a home program?

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**Family Day Care (FDC)** ~ One adult works in his/her home and may care for 5—6 preschool children at a time, depending upon whether any of the children are under the age of two. Two additional school-age children may be in care. The child care provider and the space used for child care receive a registration when approved by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS).

**Group Family Day Care (GFDC)** ~ Two adults work together in a home and care for 10-12 preschool children, depending upon whether any of the children are under the age of two. Two additional school-age children may be in care. The child care providers and the space used for child care receive a license from the OCFS regional office in Syracuse.

Children who live in the home and are enrolled in school do not count in the maximum.

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## Phone Interview Questions

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Before you schedule a site visit, you may want to ask:

- Do you smoke? Do you have pets?
- How much do you charge? (hour, day or week)
- Do I pay for days my child is sick? On vacation?
- Is there an extra fee if I am late picking up my child?
- Who supplies the food? What kinds of food are served? Will you prepare special diets when needed?
- Is there a special rate for 2 or more children from the same family?
- Do you take the children on any field trips? Are parents notified in advance?
- How long have you done family day care?
- How many children are you currently caring for? What is your limit? What is the age range of the children?
- What background do you have in childcare? Do you have training in child development? Health and nutrition? CPR? Other areas?
- How do the children in care spend their time?
- Has your program been accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) or another organization? (Visit [www.nafcc.org](http://www.nafcc.org) for more info)

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609 W. Clinton St.  
Ithaca NY 14850  
(607) 273-0259

[www.childdevelopmentcouncil.org](http://www.childdevelopmentcouncil.org)

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For a copy of NYS child care regulations and/or more information on selecting child care call the Child Development Council, or visit the NYS Office of Children and Family Services website at [www.ocfs.state.ny.us](http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us)

Call the Child Development Council with concerns about a Family Child Care program or for a history of any child care program's compliance with regulations. Call the Child Care Complaint Line at 1-800-732-5207 with concerns about a Group Family Child Care program.

To report child abuse and neglect call 1-800-342-3720.

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## Home Interviewing

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When you decide to visit a home, bring your child to the interview. Allow at least an hour, planning to go when your child is not hungry or sleepy. Observe how the provider and your child interact. Ask for a tour of the indoor and outdoor areas used for care. Observe the provider with all the children. You may want to ask:

- What do you do when children cry because they miss their parents?
- What are your policies about bottle weaning? Toilet training? Pacifiers? Demand feedings?
- Are other adults at home during the day? Do they do things with the children?
- Are parents welcome to stop in to visit their children at any time? To participate in activities?
- How often do you communicate with parents?
- What is your plan for times when you are sick or on vacation?
- Where are the children allowed to play? What do you do about play space in the winter?
- What are the naptime arrangements?
- What do you do about discipline?
- How would you handle an emergency?

**If you are unable to keep your appointment, call the provider to cancel!**

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## Health and Safety Indicators

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Family Day Care Providers are required to meet NYS Health and Safety requirements to be in compliance with regulations. Background checks and basic health and safety training are required to obtain a registration or license. Regulations pertaining to the specific modality of care can be viewed on the internet at:

[http://ocfs.state.ny.us/main/childcare/daycare\\_regs.asp](http://ocfs.state.ny.us/main/childcare/daycare_regs.asp)

Minimum requirements are outlined in regulation, however the responsibility for your child's safety and well being is yours.

When visiting a child care home, note the environment and safety precautions such as smoke detectors, outlet covers, safe exits, gates, etc. Requirements are clear, but minimal; your feeling of a home's safety is subjective. You need to take the time to ask yourself:

- Are there emergency numbers posted by the phone?
- Are the exits clear?
- Is this an environment in which I want to leave my child?
- What skills, warmth and knowledge does this person possess so I feel comfortable leaving my child?
- Does my child seem to like the provider?
- Does the provider try to involve my child with the other children?
- Does the provider continue to attend to the children's needs even though I am there?
- Do the children mix well together?

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## How much education and training do child care providers need?

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Home day care facilities that care for more than two non-related children must be regulated. Regulations include requirements that a person must be 18 years old, have experience, references and complete a basic health and safety training. In order to renew the registration or license, each child care provider must complete a minimum of thirty hours continuing education. Providers meet these requirements by attending child care specific presentations offered by our agency, State University of New York (SUNY) video presentations viewed and discussed at our location, attending college classes, or through distance learning at home.

In addition to the time requirement, providers must attain training in each of the following 9 topic areas:

- Principles of Child Development
- Nutrition & Health
- Program Development
- Safety & Security
- Business Record Maintenance & Management
- Child Abuse & Maltreatment Identification & Prevention
- Statutes & Regulations Pertaining to Child Day Care
- Statutes & Regulations Pertaining to Child Abuse & Maltreatment
- Shaken Baby Syndrome