



May 19, 2026

Dear Community,

When we think about critical infrastructure — the systems our communities rely on every day — one essential system is too often overlooked: **child care**.

*Quality child care matters for all of us, whether or not you have young children at home.*

### **For Children**

The early years of a child's life are the most important for brain development. Quality child care provides positive early learning experiences that shape a child's future — their ability to learn, build relationships, and thrive as adults.

### **For Families**

When families have access to quality child care, they can work, attend school, and meet the needs of their household. Without it, families are often forced to make impossible choices that affect their financial stability and overall well-being.

### **For Employers**

Businesses benefit when employees have reliable, quality care for their children. Families who are confident their children are safe and supported are more focused, productive, and dependable at work. That benefits employers, businesses, and the local economy.

### **For Our Community**

When families are stable and businesses are thriving, the entire community benefits. Strong child care infrastructure supports local economies, keeps workers in the workforce, and invests in the next generation.

### **One Size Does Not Fit All**

Families have different needs, values, schedules, and circumstances. A strong child care system recognizes that by offering a range of options, every family can find the right fit. What should never be negotiable is quality. Every child deserves safe, nurturing, high-quality care.

### **What Does High-Quality Child Care Look Like?**

*Here are some important things to look for when visiting any child care setting:*

- **Low child-to-staff ratios.** Lower ratios mean more individual attention, warmer interactions, and a safer environment for every child.

- **Small group sizes.** Smaller groups allow caregivers to truly know each child and respond to their individual needs.
- **Trained, educated staff.** Look for caregivers and directors with education and/or experienced in a child-related field and a commitment to ongoing training.
- **Low staff turnover.** Consistent caregivers mean consistent relationships — and young children thrive on consistency.
- **Warm, responsive caregiver-child interactions.** Watch how caregivers interact with children. Look for caregivers who talk with children, encourage curiosity, and respond warmly to their needs.
- **Safe, healthy environments.** Spaces should be clean, well-maintained, and free of hazards. Look for proper hand-washing practices, developmentally-appropriate materials, safe sleep practices for infants, and clear emergency procedures.
- **Rich, play-based learning.** Quality programs offer hands-on experiences that build curiosity, language, problem-solving, and social skills.
- **Strong family partnerships.** Look for programs that actively welcome family involvement and respect family culture and values.
- **Licensing or registration.** Quality home-based programs are registered, and center-based programs are licensed by the state.

**For setting-specific checklists you can take on a tour, visit:**

- Child Care Aware® of America: [childcareaware.org/families/choosing-quality-child-care](http://childcareaware.org/families/choosing-quality-child-care)
- ChildCare.gov: [childcare.gov/consumer-education/find-and-choose-quality-child-care](http://childcare.gov/consumer-education/find-and-choose-quality-child-care)

## Resources

The Child Development Council has resources available for families searching for quality child care, individuals with questions about child development, and community members interested in becoming child care providers.

### Child Care Referrals

The Child Development Council has a trained Referral Specialist who maintains a database of licensed and registered child care providers to help families find care that meets their needs. The Referral Specialist is also available to answer questions about child care options.

### Become a Child Care Provider

Becoming a Legally Exempt Child Care provider requires minimal start-up costs and allows you to provide care for the children of friends or family members in your home or theirs. You may also accept Child Care Assistance. Families utilizing this type of care may be eligible to receive assistance to help pay for child care.

**Start-Up Assistance**

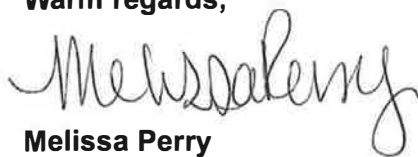
Our team provides resources and support to help you successfully open your own child care program. We offer guidance on business practices, program development, and quality programming to promote long-term success. You may also be eligible for start-up funding.

**Child-Related Questions**

The Warm Line is a free, confidential phone guidance service for families, child care providers, and community members. You can speak with a specialist about behavior, child development, adjustment to child care, and other child-related topics.

**To learn more about Child Development Council services or how you can support high quality child care, call 607-273-0259 or visit [www.childdevelopmentcouncil.org](http://www.childdevelopmentcouncil.org).**

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melissa Perry".

**Melissa Perry**  
**Child Development Council**