Finding child care can be a difficult task, whether you are a new parent, have recently moved to a new area, or are wondering what options are available. The good news is that there are plenty of resources to help you find and choose a child care program.

**Quality matters.** A safe and nurturing early learning environment allows children to get ready for school and parents to focus on their job or education. However, quality also costs.

**Start with licensed care.** While not necessarily a marker of quality, licensing standards set the baseline for health, safety and program standards for the legal operation of all child care programs. Ask to see a copy of you providers’ state license. Some states make reports on licensing, inspections, and complaints available online.

Child care is a significant expense in a family’s budget. Visit the [CCAoA website](https://www.ccaoa.org) to access tools to help you as you’re budgeting for child care costs.

- **Need help paying** for quality child care? Visit our State by State Resource Map, ask your local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency or call us at 1-800-424-2246. They can help you answer these questions:
  - Do you qualify for child care subsidies or vouchers? States receive federal funds to help low-income families pay for child care; eligibility criteria differ from state to state.
  - Do you qualify for Head Start or Early Head Start? Head Start serves 3-5 year olds; Early Head Start serves children from birth to 2 years old.
  - Does your state offer pre-K? Many states offer state funded pre-K programs, though eligibility and fees vary from state to state.
  - Are you in the military? Check out the Military Fee Assistance Program. Each branch is different–check our website for more information.
  - Are you taking advantage of tax credits for which you’re eligible? Check with a tax preparer to see if you are eligible for the Child and Dependent Care Credit or the Earned Income Tax Credit. Also check for individual state tax credits that can help reimburse or pay for child care.
  - Are you working or a student? Ask your employer or school if they have any programs to help pay for child care.

Consider the following **four steps** to choosing quality care:

1. **Get a Child Care Check List.** Your local CCR&R can help you find the right child care for you and your family. They will talk to you about the different types of child care providers in your area, ask you questions about you and your child, and create a list of child care providers for you to contact based on your child care needs.
2. **Do Your Homework.** Check out the provider before you call or visit. Look for or ask about the following information to see what standards a child care provider is following:
   - Licensing report and health and safety inspections
   - Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)
   - National accreditation information
3. **Call Providers.** Call the providers you wish to visit and make an appointment. Ask prescreening questions before you visit to make sure you are visiting providers that meet your needs.
4. **Take the Tour.** Write down questions you want to ask and use this checklist to help you make the right choice for your family. Ask the child care provider for references and ask questions about the other families’ experiences with the program.