



Choosing the right childcare for your child

At some stage, your toddler may need to attend childcare.

Concerned about the standards or safety at your childcare centre?

Contact DoCS
Children's Services on
02 9716 2153 or
1800 619 113.

You can also email your enquiries to cslicensing@community.nsw.gov.au.

Childcare services can not only help you meet your work commitments, but can also provide children with programs and activities that promote healthy development, teach them to play and socialise with other children and prepare them for the transition to school.

How do I choose a centre?

To choose the right centre for your child, take some time to think about their needs and interests and your family's needs. It may be important to choose a centre close to where you live or work or one that's close to public transport.

Make sure you visit the centre or service first and check that its policies and values are right for you. The following are some questions to ask the operators:

What are their policies?

All services should have written information available which covers what their educational objectives are and how they will be achieved, how parents can have day-to-day input into the programs

and how each child's individual interests will be catered for. They should also cover children's behaviour, health and safety, excursions, authority for access or picking up your child, how staff will treat your child and how the program is relevant to children of different cultures and abilities.

What kinds of experiences do they provide?

A balance of indoor and outdoor activities, lots of variety and enough toys and equipment to make each day interesting.

In centre-based care, a written program should be displayed and you should be able to view records about your child. All services, including home-based and family day care must talk to parents regularly about what activities their child has been involved in and they should encourage all children to develop at their own pace.

What about accidents, illnesses and infectious diseases?

If your child has an accident or becomes ill when they are in childcare, they must be cared for until a parent arrives or medical treatment is obtained. Services must always keep a record of accidents and a staff member must have First Aid qualifications.

Ask your service how it handles infectious diseases like chicken pox and make sure it has good hygiene practices to minimise the spread of infections.

What records are kept?

Records on your child must include:

- initial enrolment form
- up-to-date contact numbers
- changes to your child's health
- reports on your child's development
- information about children with special needs or allergies.

How should arriving and leaving be managed?

All children should be greeted by a staff member when they arrive and be encouraged to get involved in an activity – this helps them settle for the day. It's also good to encourage children to say goodbye. If your child is finding it hard to settle in, talk to the staff about what you can do. Sometimes it's good to spend time with your child at the centre, either in the morning or the afternoon.

The parent dropping off the child in the morning and picking them up must sign an attendance book. Any person who picks up the child other than a parent must be authorised in writing by the parent.

Can I visit my child?

Any parent (unless denied access through a court order) is entitled to visit their child at any time.

What are the rules on sleeping?

All services should provide somewhere for your child to have a nap, including fresh bedding so they can sleep if they need to – children should not be made to sleep against their will.

In family day care or home-based care, a child under two may sleep in the same room as an adult.



Types of children's services

Long day care

Long day care is usually open for 10 or more hours per day, five days per week and takes children from 6 weeks to under 6 years. Children can attend part-time or full-time childcare.

Family day care

Family day care schemes coordinate care provided by family day carers in their own homes and carers operate alone with the support of the scheme. Hours of care vary and are negotiated with the scheme's coordinator, or between the carer and the parent. Carers can take up to 5 children from babies up to under 6 years of age and two school-aged children who need before and after school or vacation care.

Home-based care

Care is provided at the home of the carer who operates independently. Hours of care vary and may be negotiated between the carer and the parent. Carers can nominate the ages of children they care for, but may take children and babies up to 12 years of age who need before and after school or vacation care.

Preschool

Preschools generally take children aged 3 to under 6 years, although some may be licensed to take children from 2 years of age.

Occasional care

Occasional care allows parents to leave their child for short periods of time, either on a casual basis or as a temporary booking.

Mobile children's service

A mobile service generally operates from a van or other vehicle which travels through a particular geographic area and sets up a childcare service in a local hall or other premises. These services may offer occasional care, preschool care or long day care. Service is offered once a week, or more often, depending on regional needs and hours vary.

