

Choosing quality child care is one of the most important decisions any family will ever make. Parents are responsible to select care that meets the special physical, social, emotional, cognitive, behavioral and creative needs of their children.

### Child Care Options

Small Family Child Care is licensed to care for six to eight children in the provider's home; different age configurations are allowed depending on the number and ages of children in care.

Large Family Child Care is licensed to care for twelve to fourteen children in the provider's home and the provider must have a full-time assistant; different age configurations are allowed depending on the number and ages of children in care.

Child Care Center ("Nursery School", "Preschool, etc.) programs are licensed by the state to operate in non-home facilities. While they vary greatly, they generally have a curriculum and staff with educational backgrounds in early childhood development. In child care centers, care can be part or full day, but times and hours are less flexible than in family child care. Many centers accept children after they are toilet-trained, but there are a growing number of centers which care for infants and/or toddlers.

In-home Caregivers (Nannies, Babysitters) come into your home to care for your children. Parents can check whether a child care provider has passed a background screening with the California Department of Justice by contacting TrustLine at 800-822-8490 or [www.trustline.org](http://www.trustline.org)

License-Exempt Child Care Providers may care for children from only one family other than their own. Children go to the provider's home for care. There is no licensing for these providers. TrustLine is available if you choose a license-exempt child care provider.



### Our Mission

*The Early Care and Education Department of the Merced County Office of Education provides families, child care professionals, and stake holders information, support, expertise, and leadership to ensure quality early care and education services and informed child care choices resulting in able families and an invested community.*

**This pamphlet provides you with key indicators of quality child care, information on types of child care available, and helpful checklists for interviewing and evaluating potential providers.**

# A.C.C.E.S.S.

A Child Care & Education Services System

## Child Care Resource and Referral

"Choosing quality care is one of the most important decisions any family ever makes for its children!"

**A.C.C.E.S.S.**  
Resource & Referral  
1520 West Main Street  
Merced, CA 95340  
(209) 722-3804  
Fax: (209) 723-1068  
Hours: 8:00 am - 5:00 pm  
Monday– Friday



Merced County Office of Education  
Lee Andersen  
Merced County Superintendent of Schools  
632 West 13<sup>th</sup> Street, Merced, CA 95340  
(209) 381-6600 [www.mcoe.org](http://www.mcoe.org)



### Child Care Referrals

We provide parents with information about quality child care and assist in the understanding of the many child care options available. We work with families to generate a customized list of potential child care providers to meet the needs and requirements of each family.

#### A.C.C.E.S.S. Resource & Referral Policy

- ◇ A.C.C.E.S.S. Resource & Referral (R&R) provides families with child care referrals for their specific child care needs.
- ◇ We refer parents to licensed family child care homes and centers in Merced County.
- ◇ Services are provided to all persons regardless of income level or other eligibility factors.
- ◇ All information received from families is confidential.
- ◇ The R&R seeks to promote quality child care; however, we do not recommend one child care provider over the other.
- ◇ The responsibility for selecting a child care provider rests with the parent. Parents are strongly encouraged to visit facilities, interview providers and staff and ask the provider for references.

Families are encouraged to contact the **Fresno Community Care Licensing Department at (559) 243-4588** in order to obtain information regarding licensing complaints prior to making the final decision for child care arrangements.

#### Oliver's Law

As a parent, you have the right to get information about any substantiated or inconclusive complaints about a child care provider that you select for your child. That information is public and you can get it by calling the regional licensing office at 1-559-234-4588.



### Lending Library & Resource Room

The Lending Library & Resource Room is available for family child care providers, center staff and child development students and instructors.

The Lending Library & Resource Room is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

#### Child Care Licensing Assistance

If you are interested in becoming a child care provider call our office for information on how to get started. Licensing orientation meetings are held monthly in English and Spanish.

Experienced staff are available to help providers through the entire licensing process. We promote provider development by offering training and support through workshops and site visits. Our Lending Library offers a variety of toys and equipment.

#### Health & Safety Training Reimbursement

Trainings to support improved health and safety practices in child care facilities are offered by the R & R through a grant from the California Department of Education, Child Development Division.

Reimbursements for required health and safety classes are available! If you have taken a first aid, CPR or a Health and Safety class during the current fiscal year you may be eligible. For more information, call the Resource & Referral office at 722-3804.



### Educational Workshops

Workshops are offered throughout the year! Check our monthly calendar for dates and times of workshops such as:

- ◇ Child Development
- ◇ Infant and Toddler Care
- ◇ Health, Safety and Nutrition
- ◇ Hands-On Activities
- ◇ Children With Special Needs
- ◇ Curriculum Development
- ◇ Promoting Your Child Care Business
- ◇ Starting A Family Child Care Business

#### Child Care Initiative Project

The Child Care Initiative Project (CCIP) is a training and support program for individuals who are starting their first family child care home business and for those who already work in family child care.

Participating child care providers receive training on best practices when working with children and how to build a successful child care business.

Special incentives are awarded for attending trainings and certificates of completion are given at each workshop. Training hours qualify toward professional growth hours.



## Key Questions for Those Caring for Preschoolers

### Preschoolers

(Three to Five Years Old)

#### Does the caregiver....

- Read books with children *every* day both one-on-one and in small groups so that everyone can see?
- Give children time to look at books by themselves or with each other every day?
- Help children recognize letters in books and things they see all around them, like signs, calendars, and directions?
- Help children sound out letters and words?
- Talk with and listen to children throughout the day?
- Encourage children to talk with each other?
- Play games like "Simon Says" and "Mother May I?" with the children?
- Listen to children's stories and poems, and write them down for children?
- Give children chances to pretend-write things like diaries, recipes, and shopping lists?
- Praise children for their efforts at pretend-writing, spelling, and copying letters?

#### Are there....

- Many kinds of books and magazines about things such as different families and cultures, animals, counting, and the alphabet?
- Lots of things with print where children can see them, like labels on pictures and containers, signs, and a big alphabet?
- Things that add reading and writing into play time, like a phone book, message pad, and markers near a play phone, or a book about trucks or maps near play cars & trucks?
- Special area for writing and drawing with things like books, paper, crayons and markers, and chalk and chalk board?

## Choosing Quality Child Care: Your Most Important Job!

### Questions To Ask For All Ages

- Does the caregiver have special training in early childhood education, First Aid, and CPR?
- Has the caregiver been in the same program or providing care in the home for at least a year?
- Are just a few children being cared for by one caregiver (low child/adult ratio)?
- If there is more than one caregiver in the setting, is the total number of children in the group still fairly small (group size)?
- If your child is in a child care center or family child care home, does the caregiver have national accreditation, such as National Association for the education of Young Children (NAEYC), or National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC), and state licensure?
- Does the caregiver welcome drop-in visits and parent ideas and involvement?
- Does the caregiver give lots of praise and encouragement to all children all day long?
- Are there planned things for children to do as well as lots of time for free play?
- Are materials such as books, blocks, toys, and art supplies available to children all day long?
- Does the environment look clean and safe, and is hand washing done often?
- Does the caregiver have written policies and procedures, including emergency plans?
- Does the caregiver have references?

Be sure to check references!!



## Key Questions for Those Caring for Babies

### For Babies

(Birth to One Year)

#### Does the caregiver.....

- Hold, touch, and make eye contact with babies often?
- Use words when responding to babies' crying?
- Talk about what is happening during routines, like "Let's wash our hands. Here's the soap."
- Read books with rhymes, naming things and letting the babies pat at pictures?
- Play games like peek-a-boo?
- Sing to babies?

#### Are there....

- Board and soft books that show different cultures, physical abilities, and types of families, where babies can reach them to hold and look at most of the day?
- Times when music is played during the day?
- Rattles, squeak toys, and push and pull toys available to babies most of the day?
- Pictures of babies' families, and a mirror to look in, where babies can see themselves?



## Key Questions for Those Caring for Toddlers

### For Toddlers

(One and Two Years Old)

#### Does the caregiver...

- Listen to, repeat, and encourage toddlers' words?
- Do finger plays, rhyming, and counting games?
- Let toddlers turn pages of board books and ask toddlers to name pictures?
- Help toddlers pretend-play things like "going to the grocery store"?

#### Are there....

- Soft, cozy places for toddlers to read stories to themselves and their stuffed animals?
- Art supplies, like big crayons and paper, out for toddlers to use during the day?
- Puppets, play phones, and dolls out for toddlers to use during the day?
- Toddlers' drawings, with their name written on it, hung up where they can see them?

