

A Brief Explanation of Your Childcare Options

The State of California has a system that monitors and licenses child care facilities. Family childcare homes and childcare centers are licensed by the State Department of Social Services. While licensing is an important screening process, it does not guarantee the quality of a childcare program. Parents themselves must visit the home or center, evaluate the program, and decide what is best for each child.

A license sets standards for the health and safe care of children by:

- Limiting the number and ages of children in care.
- Requiring that all providers be checked for child abuse convictions, criminal records, and tuberculosis clearance.
- Checking the home/center for health and safety hazards.
- Requiring all family child care providers and at least one person in a center have fifteen hours of health care training, including CPR and Pediatric First Aid.
- Licensing officials continually monitor each family childcare home and childcare center by making either scheduled or random on-site visits at the home or facility. This is done to ensure that each childcare program adheres to all licensing standards.

Family Child Care Homes

If one person in his or her own home cares for children from more than one family, the State of California requires the person, and the home, to be licensed as a family childcare home. Licensing covers the health and safety of the home, adult to child ratios, space requirements, and a background check of the childcare provider and anyone 18 years or older living in the home. A family childcare home may be licensed to care for **8 children (small license)** or **14 children (large license)**, including any of the provider's own children residing in the home until they reach 10 years of age. For licensing purposes, an infant is considered to be any child under the age of two.

When licensed for 8 children, a Family Child Care Provider may care for:

- 4 infants only, or
- 6 children with no more than 3 infants, or
- 8 children when 2 children are at least 6 years of age with a maximum of 2 infants.
- No assistant is required.

When licensed for 14 children, a Family Child Care may care for:

- 12 children with no more than 4 infants, or
- 14 children when 2 children are at least 6 years of age with a maximum of 3 infants.
- A full time assistant is required.

Child Care Centers

Centers are licensed to care for groups of **more than fourteen children**. Licensing covers the health and safety of the facility, staff to child ratios, space requirements, background checks for staff, and requires that each staff member have at least 6 early childhood units.

- The ratio of adults to children for infant care (0 to 2 years old) is **1 adult** for every **4** infants.
- For toddlers and preschoolers (2 to 5 years old), the ratio is **1 adult** to **12** children.
- For school-age (5 to 14 years), the ratio is **1 adult** to **14** children.

Additional Choices/License Exempt Child Care

The State of California makes licensing exceptions for some forms of child care. This exempt child care has not been inspected for health and safety. Exempt caregivers have not been reviewed for criminal or child abuse activity, nor do they necessarily have a background in caring for children.

Child care that is license exempt includes:

- A person who you hire to come into your home to care for your children.
- A family day care home that cares for children from one family.
- A "drop-in" arrangement, such as a health club or Co-op, where the parent remains on-site or in the building.
- Any care and supervision of children by a relative or guardian.
- Child care programs that are operated by school districts.

Recreation programs are license exempt that operate:

- Under 13 hours a week, or
- More than 12 hours a week, but no longer than 12 weeks during the year.

