

# Child Care Resources (CCR) – Parent Guide

## Child Care Information & Referrals

Child Care Resources (CCR) receives funding from the Department of Early Education and Care to make it possible for families to receive childcare referral services at no cost to them.

Child Care Resources does not recommend or endorse any particular provider or agency. Referrals are given at the request of the client/ consumer. The selections made should be of the client/consumers own personal preference. CCR shall not be held liable for any direct, incidental, consequential, indirect, or punitive claims. The final decision of any referral is directly and exclusively the responsibility of the client/consumer.

All information collected will be held in strict confidence and will not be discussed or otherwise shared with persons who do not have a legitimate need to know about such information.

## Types of Child Care Programs

Almost all child care provided outside a child's own home, whether it be in a child care center, an after school program, or in a family child care home, must be licensed or authorized by EEC. There are different types of licensed providers for which EEC sets rules for health, safety, and staffing. All persons working in a licensed child care program in MA must have a background record check. Licensed programs may also be accredited. This means that the program has met even higher standards set by a national organization.

### Group/Center-Based Programs

Centers serve children full or part-time in groups or classrooms of children. Child care centers typically care for groups of children in a place specifically designed or adapted for this use, and can provide care for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and school-aged children (depending on their license and/or other guidelines/regulations). Children are cared for in groups according to their age and number of adult caregivers. Children have the opportunity to interact with a larger number of children and adults, and the equipment and organized activities tend to provide a learning environment. Center schedules tend to be less flexible in terms of the hours and days care is available.

- Infants: A child from 1 month to 14 months of age. Child/teacher ratio is 3/1 with no more than 7 children per group.
- Toddlers: A child from 15 months to 2 years, 8 months. Child/teacher ratio is 4/1 with no more than 9 children per group.
- Preschoolers: A child from 2 years, 9 months to kindergarten age. Child/teacher ratio is 10/1 with no more than 20 children per group.
- Nursery Schools, Preschools, and Pre-K: two years and nine months old to kindergarten. Preschool programs (sometimes called Nursery Schools) offer only part time sessions (part-week, part-day or both) usually for children 2 years, 9 months to kindergarten age. Generally these programs run on a school year schedule, are closed during school vacations and holidays, and may or may not offer a summer session.
- Early Head Start/Head Start: infants through five years old whose families receive public assistance, children with a disability, and low-income families.

### School Age/After School Programs

School age care is provided in a group setting in which care is provided for children Kindergarten age and up, before and/or after school and possibly during school vacations and summer. These programs may be operated by public or private schools, or by community or private agencies. The child/teacher ratio is 13/1 with no more than 30 children per group. (These programs are sometimes called extended day or after school programs)

### Family Child Care Programs

Family Child Care (FCC) is care that is delivered in a provider's home. Children in a family child care home may range in age from infant through school age and programs may serve between a maximum of six or ten children (with an additional assistant). . Generally, FCC providers do not care for more than 2 children younger than 15 months at any given time. These providers may be more flexible in terms of hours than a center based program. Children, particularly very young children may feel more secure and benefit from the home-like environment and small group setting.

The current license for all these programs will be posted in a prominent location, so look for the license.

### There are 3 types of FCC Providers:

- Family Child Care (FCC) which allows up to a maximum of six children;
- Family Child Care Plus (FCCP) which allows up to 8 children so long as at least two of the children are school aged;

- Large Family Child Care (LFCC) which allows for up to 10 children if the provider has an **approved assistant** working with them. Children may range in age from infant through school age.

Family Child Care Providers are all self-employed, but they may be *independent* or *subcontracted* with a *Family Child Care System agency*. A system agency represents FCC providers, oversees business and administration, training and continuing education, and evaluates the quality of care of subcontracted providers.

## Other Authorized Programs

EEC also authorizes programs that are license-exempt, such as Public School Preschool Programs. To find out if your local Public School offers an early childhood program, call your local public school, or visit the Department of Elementary & Secondary Education website: [www.eec.state.ma.us](http://www.eec.state.ma.us) Other types of care that are not licensed by the state include care by an adult in the child's home, and care provided by a relative in the relative's home. Summer camps are licensed by the Board of Health in each individual city or town.

## • Tips on Choosing Child Care for Parents

Choosing a program for your infant, preschooler, or school age child is a very personal choice for each family. The best program is the one that matches your own child's temperament, likes and dislikes health, interests, and behavior. A program should also be compatible with your family's philosophies, and schedule, and should provide a safe environment that is fun, educational, and nurturing.

## What to look for in an early education or after school program:

- The EEC license! The EEC License means:
  - Programs must be healthy, safe, and offer activities that help your child develop and grow;
  - Providers have training in first aid and are CPR certified;
  - Providers have specialized training in child development, and curriculum implementation;
  - All employees are required to undergo a criminal background check; and
  - Programs must maintain appropriate ratios of teachers to children.
- **Adult to Child Ratio**  
The ratio is the number of children there are for each adult. The fewer the children for each adult, the better it is for your child. You want your child to get plenty of attention. The younger your child, the more important this is. In Massachusetts, babies need an adult to child ratio of no more than 1:3 (one adult for three infants); while four-year-olds can do well with a ratio of 1:10 (one adult for ten children).
- **Group Size**  
How many children are in the group? The smaller the group, the better. Imagine a group of 25 two-year olds with five adults, compared to a group of 10 with two adults. Both groups have the same adult to child ratio. Which would be calmer and safer? Which would be more like a family?
- **Caregiver Qualifications**  
Ask about the caregivers' training and education. Caregivers with degrees and/or special training in working with children may be better able to help your child learn. Are the caregivers involved in activities to improve their skills? Do they attend classes and workshops?
- **Turnover**  
Check how long caregivers have been at the center or providing care in their homes. It's best if children stay with the same caregiver at least a year. Caregivers who come and go make it hard on your child. Getting used to new caregivers takes time and energy that could be spent on learning new things.
- **Accreditation**  
Find out if the child care provider has been accredited by a national organization. Providers that are accredited have met voluntary standards for child care that are higher than most state licensing requirements. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and The National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) are the two largest organizations that accredit child care programs. Please visit the following websites for more information regarding accreditation:

- Child Care Aware [www.childcareaware.org](http://www.childcareaware.org)
- National After School Association [www.naaweb.org](http://www.naaweb.org)
- National Association for the Education of Young Children [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)
- National Association for Family Child Care [www.nafcc.org](http://www.nafcc.org)

- **Health and Safety**

All adults and children should wash their hands frequently, especially before and after meals and before and after using the bathroom. All areas should be cleaned daily, especially bathrooms. Rugs, cushions and toys should be cleaned regularly. The space should be child-proofed and supplies should be stored out of children's reach or in locked cabinets. There should be smoke alarms, fire extinguishers and a second exit.

- **Family Involvement**

You want a caregiver who talks to you and makes you feel comfortable and welcome. You should be able to visit the home or classroom as well as ask the provider questions. Likewise, the provider should talk to you about your child's needs and progress. Some examples of parent involvement may be offering to stop by for a story, snack lunch helper or even an activity; is the program in need of any volunteers? Providers always can use an extra set of hands and it can be quality time with your child; check in at drop-off and pick-up time to see how your child is doing and how things are going.

## [38 Indicators of Quality Child Care Check list—Download here.](#) *(Right click to open)*

### Other things to look for based on your child's age:

#### ***For infants:***

- Caregivers are responsive, nurturing, engaged, and clearly enjoy babies.
- Caregivers take primary responsibility for specific babies to create consistency in care and the opportunity to establish secure relationships.
- Space allows developing infants to freely explore their environment.
- Organized, comfortable sleeping, eating, diapering and playing areas.
- A daily routine that meets the needs of each baby.



#### ***For toddlers:***

- Caregivers set clear and consistent limits, but do so with kindness.
- Space is stimulating to allow active toddlers to safely explore their environment.
- Caregivers spend most of the time engaging with the children at the children's level (on the floor, at low tables).
- There are books in the space for children to look at on their own and that are read to them by adults.

#### ***For preschoolers:***

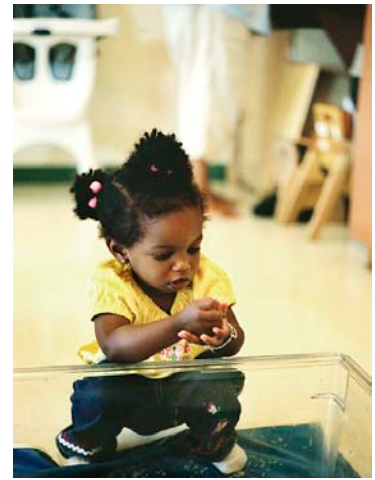
- Teachers plan activities that engage the interests and learning needs of the children.
- There are opportunities for children to choose activities, or to play alone, or with other children.
- Children access toys and materials on their own at appropriate times during the day.
- Opportunities for children to help and cooperate in the classroom.

#### ***For school aged children:***

- Involve your child in the selection of a program which best meets his or her interests, such as hands-on activities, art, music, science, sports, creative dance, community involvement, field trips, academic support; or a combination of these activities.
- The program provides space for socialization and a quiet space to work on homework or to have down time and has a rich learning atmosphere that supports your child's education.
- The program seems to encourage your child's independence and builds self-esteem.

## Questions to ask prospective child care providers:

- Is your program EEC licensed or authorized as license exempt?
- Do you have any openings?
- What hours are you open?
- What are the ages of the other children my child would be grouped with?
- What is the ratio of adults to children?
- Are there holidays or other dates that the program closes?
- Do you offer part-time or flexible care?
- What backup care is provided in case of provider illness?
- What activities would my child experience?



### Free Online Search for Child Care Services:

Click on the link below to access free child care provider information. Please note that the information provided will only include the Massachusetts cities/towns listed above.

<https://orm.naccraware.net/orm/ormLogin.action?uid=Y6AF2TGZUTO8XZB>

If questions arise, please contact an Information and Referral Counselor @ 508.796.1836 for the Greater Worcester area or 978.602.8651 or 978.602.8650 for the Greater Fitchburg area.

### Enhanced Referral Services for Children with Disabilities:

Parents of children with special needs have the option to choose an enhanced referral at no additional charge. This option allows the Information & Referral Counselor (I & R) to take some extra time exploring the needs of the child and family. Enhanced Referral requires parental permission to share the specifics of the search criteria with the potential child care providers. The counselor personally speaks with each potential program that meets the parent's needs and to confirm availability. These referrals are given to the parent to contact and visit. The counselor periodically "checks in" with the parent to assist with the search, until a caregiver is selected. Parents are not required to participate in the Enhanced Referral option, and can choose to accept the basic referral service at anytime. Please email at [ptorres@sevenhills.org](mailto:ptorres@sevenhills.org), [ecarroll@sevenhills.org](mailto:ecarroll@sevenhills.org) or [kmercier@sevenhills.org](mailto:kmercier@sevenhills.org) for more information.

**Email Option:** Please feel free to email a request for referral information to either of the email addresses above. An I & R Counselor will get back to you within one business day to assist you with child care referrals.

We very much appreciate your suggestions, comments and questions, as your input helps us ensure the highest possible quality of care and services. Please take a moment to complete a short survey by clicking the link below. All of your information will remain confidential. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/MR8BFC8>

### Cities and towns served by Fitchburg Child Care Resources agency:

Acton, Ashburnham, Ashby, Ayer, Baldwinville, Barre, Boxborough, Clinton, Concord, Devens, Fayville, Fiskdale, Fitchburg, Gardner, Gilbertville, Groton, Hardwick, Harvard, Hubbardston, Jefferson, Lancaster, Leominster, Linwood, Littleton, Lunenburg, Northbridge, Oakdale, Oakham, Otter River, Pepperell, Princeton, Rochdale, Rutland, Sheldonville, Shirley, Sterling, Sterling Junction, Templeton, Townsend, W. Townsend, Westminster, Wheelwright, Winchendon

### Cities and towns served by the Worcester Child Care Resources agency:

Ashland, Auburn, Bellingham, Berlin, Blackstone, Boylston, Brimfield, Brookfield, Charlton, Cherry Valley, Douglas, Dover, Dudley, E. Brookfield, E. Douglas, Foxboro, Framingham, Franklin, Grafton, Holden, Holland, Holliston, Hopkinton, Hopedale, Hudson, Leicester, Manchaug, Marlborough, Maynard, Medfield, Medway, Mendon, Milford, Millbury, Millis, Millville, Natick, New Braintree, Norfolk, Northborough, N. Brookfield, Oxford, Plainville, Sherborn, Shrewsbury, Southborough, Southbridge, Spencer, Stow, Sturbridge, Sudbury, Sutton, Upton, Uxbridge, Wales, Walpole, Warren, Wayland, Webster, W. Boylston, W. Brookfield, Westborough, Westwood, Whitinsville, Worcester, Wrentham

## Parenting Websites

<http://www.more4kids.info/> This website is chock-full of articles on any aspect of parenting you can think of and for any age. Whether you're nursing an infant, potty-training a toddler, helping a third-grader with homework, or buying a cell phone for a teenager, this website has advice and ideas to help you out...

<http://www.zerotothree.org> Like the name implies, zerotothree.com focuses on the first three years of your child's life.

<http://familyfun.go.com> Here you will find a website dedicated to fun and creative activities and projects.

<http://www.parents.com> A go-to resource for Parents with children of all ages.

<http://www.parentsworld.com/> This site has information for single parents

## Complaint Policy – Resource & Referral

All complaints related to this agency (CCR) should be directed to the Program Director, Kim Dion at 508-796-1833 or Affiliate Vice President, Cheryl Trant at 978-602-8681. However, individuals may contact, at their discretion, the applicable state or federal regulating authority.

## Complaint Policy – Child Care Providers

CCR supports and encourages families to report complaints regarding Child Care Providers directly to the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) 508.798.5180 and/or the Department of Children and Families 800.792.5200. The purpose of this policy is to protect the rights of children and families involved with CCR. This policy also supports the authority of EEC to determine whether a child care provider is in compliance with state regulations governing child care programs; and CCR's role in helping providers improve the quality of services they offer.

## EEC Offices and Locations

---

### Central Office

51 Sleeper Street, 4th Floor

Boston, MA 02210

Phone: (617) 988-6600

Fax: (617) 988-2451

TTY: (617) 988-2454

### Regional Offices

#### Western MA

95 Liberty Street, Suite 1124

Springfield, MA 01103

Phone: (413) 788-8401

Fax: (413) 784-1227

#### Central MA

10 Austin Street,

Worcester, MA 01609

Phone: (508) 798-5180

Fax: (508) 798-5181

### Southeast and Cape

1 Washington Street, Suite 20

Taunton, MA 02780

Phone: (508) 828-5025

Fax: (508) 828-5235

#### Metro Boston

1250 Hancock Street, Suite 120-S

Quincy, MA 02169

Phone: (617) 472-2881

Fax: (617) 472-2722

#### Northeast

360 Merrimack Street, Building 9, Third Floor

Lawrence, MA 01843

Phone: 978-681-9684

Fax: 978-689-7618

Visit the EEC website for listings of all licensed child care programs: [www.eec.state.ma.us](http://www.eec.state.ma.us)



## Strengthening Families

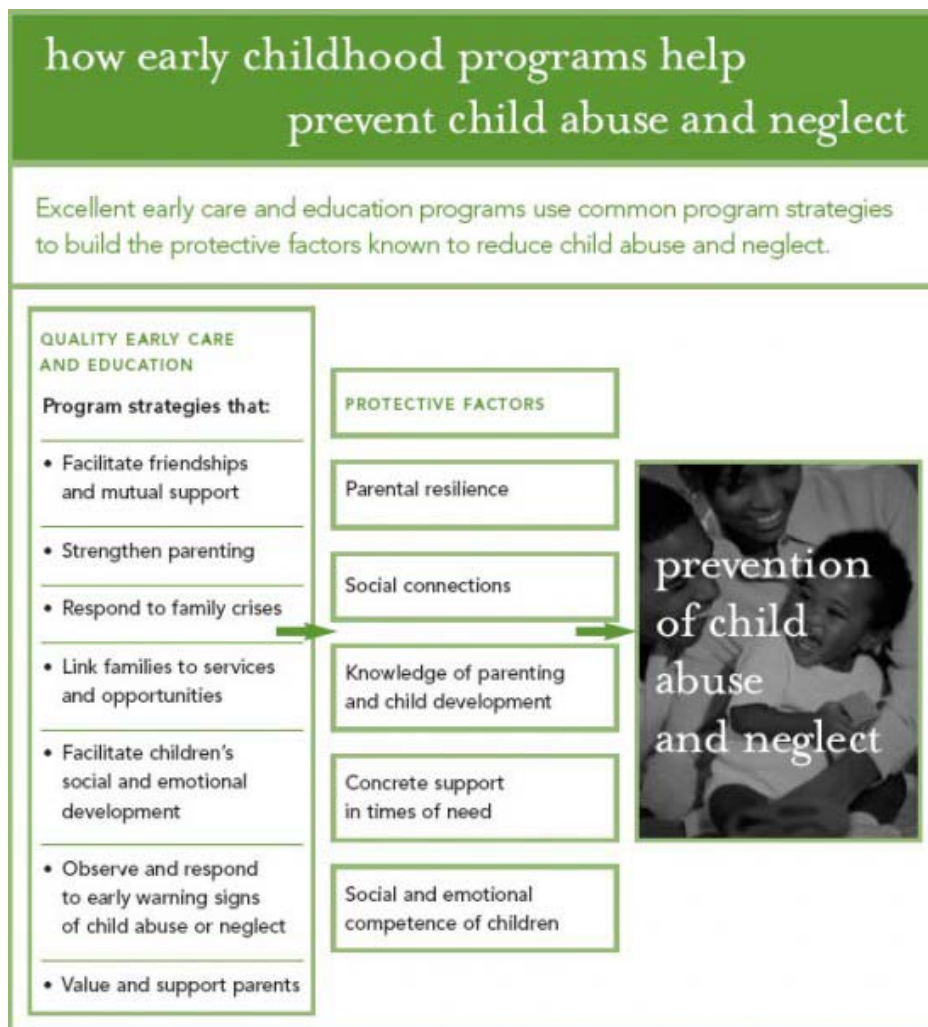
Across the country, early care and education programs, child welfare departments, and others are using the **Strengthening Families** approach to build five Protective Factors in families:

- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Concrete support in times of need
- Children's social and emotional development

Research shows that these factors reduce the incidence of child abuse and neglect by providing parents with what they need to parent effectively, even under stress. By building relationships with families, programs can recognize signs of stress and build families' Protective Factors with timely, effective help.

Activities that build the Protective Factors can be built into programs and systems that already exist in every state, such as early childhood education and child welfare, at little cost.

Strengthening Families has widespread support from social science researchers, state child welfare officials, early childhood practitioners, and policy experts. Currently, the Strengthening Families approach is being applied in 36 states. Early childhood educators want to strengthen families: a National Association for the Education of Young Children survey shows that 97% want to do more to prevent maltreatment.



The Strengthening Families Electronic Library contains hundreds of resources to help you strengthen families—whether you're working directly with families, developing staff or programs, or making the case for using the Strengthening Families approach. Many of these resources were created by members of the Strengthening Families National Network—a forum for sharing knowledge and tools, learning together within and across states, and helping each other transform systems that support children and families. *(Taken from [www.strengtheningfamilies.net](http://www.strengtheningfamilies.net))*

For more information about the **Strengthening Families** approach and how you can help strengthen the families in your care, go to [www.strengtheningfamilies.net](http://www.strengtheningfamilies.net)

(Information provided by the [Department of Early Education and Care](#) )