



# Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam, Inc.

## Child Care Handbook



## Who We Are

### **Mission Statement:**

The Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam, Inc. works to promote affordable and quality child care, provide information and support to families, and strengthen the early childhood workforce in Dutchess and Putnam Counties.

### **Our work benefits the economic health and quality of life of our communities.**

The Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam, Inc. is the only agency in Dutchess and Putnam counties to offer coordinated services to all segments of the child care community, including child care providers, families, companies and corporations, government entities, other community-based organizations and the general public.

### **The Child Care Council's services include the provision of:**

- ✓ Regularly updated information on child care programs
- ✓ Early care and education information, and referrals for families of children and youth
- ✓ Training and technical support to potential and existing early care and education professionals and programs serving children birth through school age
- ✓ Facilitating connections for working families to health insurance
- ✓ Parenting and work-life seminars in the community and in the workplace
- ✓ Advocacy and community planning on behalf of children and working families
- ✓ Free child care referrals of licensed and registered child care providers in Dutchess and Putnam counties



All employees who have access to client, personnel or agency information, through whatever means, are responsible for keeping information in the strictest of confidence. Information concerning Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam, Inc. clients, employees, or agency business shall not be discussed with anyone not directly concerned.

The Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam, Inc (CCCDP) makes referrals, not recommendations, to families and places the responsibility of choice with the families.

## Beginning Your Child Care Search

- ✓ A good child care arrangement is based upon mutual respect between parent and child care provider.
- ✓ You will need to visit more than one program or home.
- ✓ You are the best judge of the right type of atmosphere for your child.
- ✓ Prices may vary greatly. As a general rule, most families pay between 10 and 35 percent of their gross income for child care.
- ✓ Trained Child Care Specialists are available to assist you with making your child care decisions. Call them with your questions or concerns.
- ✓ The referrals provided are not recommendations.
- ✓ No one knows your family as well as you do. What's good for one family is not necessarily good for yours.
- ✓ Trust yourself! Your good judgment and instincts are most important. If you feel you need more preparation, call the Council.



## The Basics of Regulated Child Care

New York State Office of Children and Family Services sets regulation for child care. A license or registration means that the program has met the state's basic requirements for health and safety. Additional information on a program's regulatory history is available by visiting [www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/childcare](http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/childcare).

- ✓ All care provided outside the child's home which involves more than two children for more than three hours a day, must be regulated by the State of New York.
- ✓ Regulations specify child/staff ratios, facility size, staff qualifications, and health, safety and nutritional requirements. Such as:
  - Child care providers and program staff must go through a state background check that looks for prior convictions. These programs also have annual visits from licensing workers and must display their certificates in a prominent place.
  - Requires all child care providers to have at least one employee who holds a valid certificate in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid on the premise of the child care program during the program's operating hours.
- ✓ The child care arrangement must be dependable. It is important for children to develop a good relationship with the provider, to feel comfortable in the environment, and to feel secure in their surroundings. Parents must be able to count on the child care provider to be there as required.



- ✓ The child care space should be clean and free of hazardous conditions. Equipment and materials must be well maintained. Parents must feel confident that the adult supervision is adequate to keep children from harm.
- ✓ In addition to feeling safe and secure, children need to be stimulated physically and mentally in order to develop normally. The child care provider must be knowledgeable about child development so that a program of age appropriate activities can be offered to the child.

**Regulations set a basic minimum standard required by law, but may not meet your personal expectations or standards associated with high quality care.**

## Exploring Your Options

### Types of Care

#### Day Care Center

A day care center refers to child care in a non-residential setting. Most centers offer a full day program and are open year round. Some centers will accept children on a part-time basis, others will not. Some centers provide care to children of all ages, including school age children, before and after school and when school is not in session. Other centers provide care to one age group, such as preschoolers or infants. There are centers that are small, enrolling perhaps only 15 children and others that are larger, enrolling more than 100 children.

A day care center must be licensed by New York State Office of Children and Family Services (NYSOCFS). The center must meet specific requirements for facility, health, safety, staffing and educational programming.

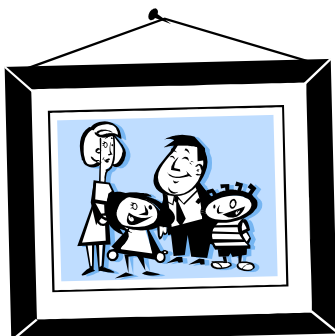
Ages	Ratio	Maximum Group
6 weeks - 18 months	4:1	8
18 months - 3 years	5:1	12
3 years	7:1	18
4 years	8:1	21
5 years	9:1	24
6 - 10 years	10:1	20
10 - 12 years	15:1	30

#### Group Family Day Care

Group family day care takes place in the provider's home for all or part of the day. A group family day care may care for children ages 6 weeks through 12 years of age. One provider and at least one assistant care for a group of children, usually of mixed ages, and may care for up to 16 children as long as 4 are school age and there is one provider for each 2 children under the age of 2 in care. Always check the license for the actual capacity.



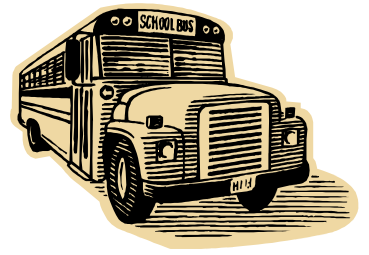
#### Family Day Care



Family day care takes place in the provider's home for all or part of the day. One provider cares for a small group of children, usually of mixed ages. A family day care home may care for children ages 6 weeks through 12 years of age. In New York State, a family day care home must meet requirements of NYSOCFS if they care for more than 2 children for more than 3 hours a day. A family day care provider may care for up to 8 children as long as 2 are school age and no more than 2 are under the age of two. Always check the registration for the actual capacity.

## School Age Child Care

This refers to care for school age children in the hours before and after school and at times when school is not in session. Day care centers, family day care homes and group homes may offer school age child care. Public schools, youth recreation groups, religious organizations and other community groups often sponsor school age child care programs. These programs are required to be registered by the NYSOCFS. School Age programs may enroll children through high school age.



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## Head Start/Early Head Start



Head Start and Early Head Start are federally funded programs. Head Start programs are for children ages 2.9 to 5 years of age and Early Head Start programs are for children 6 weeks to 3 years of age. They provide 3 hours of a free program and can sometimes offer extended/all day care for a fee. It's open to all families who meet income eligibility requirements. Head Start/Early Head Start commonly serves unemployed parents, low income families, foster children, homeless children, TA recipients, SSI recipients, and children with special needs.

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## Nursery Schools and Preschools

These are social and educational programs for children ages 3 to 5 years. They operate for less than 3 hours per session, 2 to 5 times a week and follow a school year calendar. They are not required to be licensed, but may need approval of the local health department. They can voluntarily register with the New York State Department of Education, which sets guidelines for facility, staff and program. Nursery Schools may also apply for accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children.



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## In-Home Care



In-Home care means care in the child's own home by someone that the parent has employed. There are trained in-home providers, usually called nannies, as well as in-home providers that have no training. There are live-in or live-out in-home providers. This type of provider is not required to be licensed in New York State.

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## New York State Universal Pre-K Program

These programs are state funded public school pre-kindergarten programs for children who turn 4 by December 1 of the school year. In addition to the developmental program, comprehensive health and social services are offered to the families. Pre-K programs may be full or part day and follow the school calendar. Check your local school district for availability. This is not offered in all school districts.



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## Summer Day Camps



These offer full or part day summer activities, frequently outdoors. Religious organizations, community centers or private groups may operate summer camps. In New York State, summer camps must have a state, city or county Health Department permit to operate legally.

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## Legally Exempt Providers

A Legally Exempt Provider is one adult caring for no more than 2 unrelated children in his/her home. They are **NOT** regulated by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services.



## Beyond the Basics: Indicators For a Higher Quality Program

In a quality child care environment, caregivers respond positively to differences in children's abilities, interests and experiences. Children with and without disabilities develop an appreciation of each other and of individual differences. The focus is on planned developmental activities—individualized or in small groups. The environment will provide needed predictability and routine, as well as novelty and stimulation. Your child will grow and learn physically, emotionally, intellectually, and socially alongside his/her peers. You and your child's caregivers will develop a mutually respectful communication system, building and enhancing understanding and trust, leading to optimal development of your child.

### A program should offer...



- A low rate of staff turnover
- Better staff/child ratio than required
- A written curriculum
- Daily or weekly activities that will help children learn
- Age-appropriate materials that are accessible to the children
- Quality books that are culturally diverse
- Manipulative toys such as blocks and puzzles
- Creative materials such as crayons, paint, paper, and paste
- Riding toys, climbing structures, pull toys and balls
- Space for running, jumping and quiet time
- Grown-up clothes, household items, and dolls for dramatic play
- Music activities such as singing, dancing, and simple instruments.
- Toys that are culturally sensitive
- Opportunities to explore nature
- Time for individual and small-group play
- A balance between outdoor play and indoor activities
- Field trips to parks, the library and other places of interest



## QUALITYstarsNY

New York State is in the beginning stages of developing a Child Care Rating System (QUALITYstarsNY), a NYS quality rating and improvement system. It is a voluntary program to rate, improve and communicate levels of quality in all regulated early care and learning programs. Participating child care programs will earn one to five stars based on ratings in four categories:

- Learning Environment
- Family Engagement
- Qualifications and Experience
- Leadership and Management

For information on the process and progress of QUALITYstarsNY, visit [www.qualitystarsny.org](http://www.qualitystarsny.org).



## Accreditation for Child Care

**It is important to understand that state regulations are no guarantee of a quality program.**

**Accreditation by a national organization requires that programs meet a higher standard than state regulation.**

An accredited program must offer the kind of care, attention, and educational activities parents look for in high quality child care programs. It must also offer activities and experiences that will aid a child's growth and development.

To become accredited, a program's strengths and weaknesses are rated by the program staff. Then, a professional child care expert observes the program, and finally, the program is reviewed and receives feedback on how it matches up to the accrediting organization's standards. The Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam, Inc. encourages all programs to seek accreditation so they may provide a higher level of quality care for the children enrolled.



**The following organizations offer accreditation based on national quality standards.**

### **The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**

This organization has developed a set of quality standards that center-based programs must meet to receive accreditation. Receipt of accreditation indicates that an early education program provides a high quality learning environment for children that exceeds the threshold for quality set by licensing requirements. Programs must complete a self-study, submit an application, and have ratings verified by an NAEYC validator.

### **National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC)**

This professional organization offers education and support for quality programming in family child care. It has developed a set of standards that define quality for family child care homes. To have a program accredited by NAFCC, the family child care provider must complete a self study to rate the degree to which standards are met, submit an application to NAFCC, and have the ratings validated by an NAFCC Observer.

### **Council on Accreditation (COA)**

National accreditation is available for school age programs that choose to undertake this process. As of September 1, 2008, The Council on Accreditation developed COA After School Standards. This is a comprehensive, yet program specific, set of quality standards for after school program recognition and accreditation. These standards and after school program recognition opportunities support quality in areas such as programming, continuous quality improvement, developing and maintaining healthy relationships, training and professional development, and staff supervision and support.



### **After School Works NY!**

Currently AfterSchoolWorksNY offers a credential for staff and is piloting a New York State School Age Accreditation Program. ([www.afterschoolworksny.org](http://www.afterschoolworksny.org))

### **American Camping Association (ACA)**

Summer day camps accredited by the ACA must meet up to 300 standards for health, safety, and program quality.

## Making the Arrangements

### Visiting and Interviewing

**A**fter reviewing your child care needs and familiarizing yourself with important aspects of quality care, you will be ready to begin investigating specific programs.

In the case of day care centers, you should try to visit a number of centers several months before the time you would like to enroll your child, particularly in the case of infant and toddler care. There is a great shortage of center care for infants and toddlers. In fact, there may be waiting lists for infants and toddlers.

If you are unable to conduct your search so far in advance, it is very important to act immediately on the referrals you receive. If you wait even a day, the opening may be filled.

You will want to visit family day care homes somewhat closer to the time of enrolling because many providers do not know what their openings will be and usually are not able to hold spaces.



You may be able to do some of your screening of child care programs (particularly in the case of family day care homes) over the phone. In your telephone interview, verify the information supplied by the referral service, hours, fees and openings. Once you have determined that you are interested, make an appointment to visit. Pick a time when children are in care and bring your child with you. Allow at least an hour for a visit. Take along a list of questions and things to look for during your visit.

While you are there ask for informational material such as parent handbook, brochure, information sheet or parent provider agreement. After your visit, these materials will help you in your decision making.

### Now that you have made your decision:

**O**nce you have decided on a child care arrangement, be clear about what the service provides and what your responsibilities are. Misunderstandings can be prevented through good communication from the very start.

In the case of **day care centers**, be sure to read all materials and the contract the center requires. Ask about things you don't quite understand. Ask before you sign anything! Request a copy of a signed contract.

With **family day care**, both parent and provider should sign an agreement that states responsibilities, policies and terms of payments. This is usually referred to as a parent/provider agreement. If the family day care provider does not have one suggest that you sit down and write one together. Again, having things clearly spelled out can prevent some unpleasant misunderstandings in the future. Once you sign an agreement, request and keep a copy for yourself.

In preparing an agreement for an **in-home provider**, you will want to go into more detail. This is your opportunity to state clearly what is and is not allowed in your home.

Below is a sample list of issues that you may want to address in your agreement.

- Days and hours provider is to work,
- Terms of payment, including:
  - Amount to be paid
  - When payment is due
  - Whether paid by check or cash
  - Payment for overtime
  - Payment for additional duties
  - Payment for holiday, sick days, vacation
  - Social security, workers' compensation, disability insurance,
- Rules concerning visitors, phone calls, television, radio, etc.,
- Instructions concerning eating and sleeping schedules,
- Signed statement by the provider that he/she will not use alcohol or narcotics while caring for your children,
- Amount of notice necessary to terminate agreement.



**The last page of this booklet has sample questions to ask. Tear off and bring it with you!**

## Monitoring the Quality of your Child's Care

Once you have selected a child care arrangement you, of course, may feel relieved that the decision is made and the selection process complete. However, your responsibility as a parent for evaluating your child's care has not ended. As an intelligent consumer of child care services, you will need to monitor your chosen program in an ongoing fashion. This will help protect your child and allow you peace of mind.

It is not always easy for parents to know just how to begin to develop a good relationship with their child care provider and how to monitor the care their child receives. Here are some suggestions to help you get off to a good start.

### Get Involved

Attend any parent meetings at the child care center or home. Ask to have meetings set up if they are not already being held. Let the center director or provider know that you are interested in meeting periodically with other parents and the staff.

Offer to collect free household items for the children to make things with. These may include egg cartons, fabric, jars, magazines, etc.

If you have a skill such as cooking, sewing, woodworking, playing a musical instrument or storytelling, offer to come to the center or home and share it with the children.

Volunteer to go on field trips, plan special events for parents and/or children, phone other parents about events, or make a special food for a birthday or holiday party.

Contribute to or offer to start a newsletter for parents about the center or home.

Clip articles from newspapers and magazines that may be of interest to the caregiver. These might include ideas for field trips, arts and crafts, recipes or child development issues.

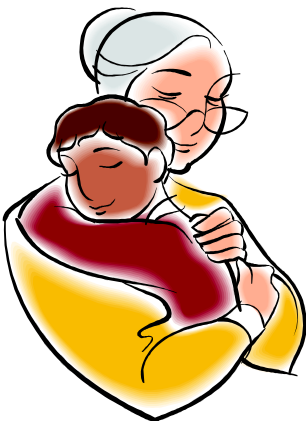
Ask questions daily about the day's events and how your child participated.

As a busy working parent, of course you won't be able to do all of the above, but try to fit in a few of these activities. Not only will it help you to feel a part of your child's day but your child will benefit from this close connection between home and child care.



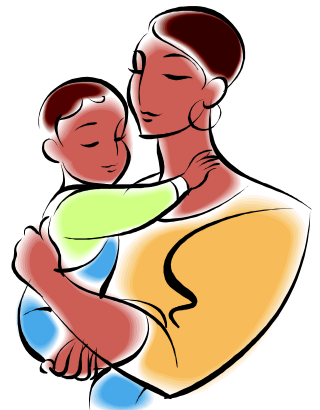
### Visiting

No matter what form of child care you choose, it is very important for parents to drop in unannounced once in a while to see how things are going. Observe activities that are going on, how many children are present, how well the children are being supervised, the conditions of the home or center and whether the children present seem to be enjoying themselves. Notice also if there are any other adults present that you are not familiar with. Always ask who they are, their reason for being there and how often they are there.



#### A NOTE ABOUT INSTINCTS

**One of the most important things a parent can do when interviewing child care providers is to pay attention to their instincts. What is your reaction to a place or provider? Do you feel comfortable around the provider? Often our instincts tell us things that we cannot define or put into words. Trust your instincts, even if you cannot explain them.**



## Paying for your child care:

Child care, housing, food, and taxes are the four major expenses of working parents. It is important that parents understand and expect that good child care is expensive. Insuring the health, safety and happiness of your child while in child care is extremely important.

While all parents value the service provided, for many the cost of child care will be a serious concern. Be assured that there are some sources of financial assistance available for working parents. Another source of financial assistance for working parents is the federal and state tax credits and deductions. The Internal Revenue Service and New York State can provide you with instructions on how to claim this credit.

Although fees vary greatly, you should expect to spend anywhere from 10% to 35% of your gross income on child care. Financial assistance is available on several levels. There is the public Child Care Subsidy Program, private scholarships, tax credits, sibling discounts and employer assistance programs. Some child care programs offer private scholarships, sliding fee scales, or are willing to negotiate their fees.

Talk with the Referral Specialists for further information concerning these.



### **Below is some general information concerning the cost of child care services:**

- Infant care is usually more expensive than care for older children.
- Most day care centers and some family day care homes offer reduced rates for siblings.
- In-home care is the most expensive form of child care. When you have full time in-home care, you must pay at least minimum wage if the provider works more than 20 hours per week (many in-home providers set their fees well above minimum wage), time and a half for over 40 hours, social security, unemployment tax and workers' compensation.
- Most child care programs will require a security deposit or registration fee when you register your child.
- Some programs may have extra fees for materials, transportation, lunches, or late pick-up.
- Request receipts for all fees paid.
- Be sure to ask for the Tax ID number for your tax purposes.

### Average Cost of Child Care

	<b>Dutchess</b>		<b>Putnam</b>	
	Range	Average	Range	Average
<b>Child Care Center</b>				
Infants (6 weeks- 18 months)	\$175-\$360	\$239	\$255-\$327	\$284
Toddlers (19 months- 35 months)	\$100-\$250	\$184	\$150-\$325	\$242
Preschoolers (3-5 years)	\$100-\$300	\$184	\$150-\$325	\$239
School Age (5-12 years)	\$60-\$250	\$175	\$150-\$325	\$218
<b>Family/Group Family Child Care Programs</b>				
Infants (6 weeks- 23 months)	\$150-\$255	\$195	\$170-\$350	\$251
Toddlers (24 months- 35 months)	\$100-\$250	\$184	\$150-\$325	\$242
Preschoolers (3-5 years)	\$100-\$300	\$184	\$150-\$325	\$239
School Age (5-12 years)	\$60-\$250	\$175	\$150-\$325	\$218.
<b>School Age Programs</b>				
Weekly (5 years- high school)	\$15-\$300	\$120	\$25-\$375	\$150
Hourly part time (5 years- high school)	\$5-\$10	\$8	\$5-\$10	\$8

### Financial Assistance

The Department of Social Services can provide child care assistance to families that meet income eligibility requirements. **Is your household income below these levels? (Use appropriate county & family size)**  
Please Note: These figures do change.

Family Size	Dutchess	Putnam
2	\$18,387	\$29,420
3	\$23,162	\$37,060
4	\$27,927	\$44,700
5	\$32,712	\$52,340
6	\$37,487	\$59,980
7	\$42,262	\$67,620

If you are not eligible, there are certain tax credits that you may be able to use, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit or the Child and Dependent Care Credit. Be sure that you get the taxpayer ID number from your provider and keep all your receipts.

#### **Department of Social Services contact information:**

##### **Dutchess County:**

Poughkeepsie office: (845) 486-3000

Millbrook office: (845) 677-5532

**Putnam County:** (845) 808-1500 x45260

## **Tax Credits**

The following child care assistance programs help families with the high cost of child care. Each type of child care financial assistance has different qualifications, so work with The Child Care Council and your employer's human resources department to make sure you get all the facts.

### **State Child Care Subsidies**

Child care subsidies are available in every state to help families with the cost of child care. Usually, child care subsidies are available for working families earning low-incomes, receiving TANF, or in some cases enrolled in school. If eligible, you will pay part of the cost while the rest is paid directly to your selected child care provider. ([www.mybenefits.ny.gov](http://www.mybenefits.ny.gov))

### **Local Programs**

Local government, United Way agencies, or other community or faith-based organizations sometimes provide child care scholarships. (Call 211 for more information)

### **Employer/College Support**

Your employer may provide child care scholarships, discounts to certain programs or on-site child care at reduced rates. Colleges or universities may also have programs to help with child care costs.

### **Child Care Program Assistance**

Your child care provider may offer scholarships, discounts or a sliding fee scale.

### **Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) Programs**

Many states offer free or low cost prekindergarten programs for 3 and 4 year old children. Eligibility requirements vary by state but the goal of all prekindergarten programs is to make sure that children are prepared for kindergarten. Public schools and other child care settings offer prekindergarten programs during school hours. (contact your local school district for more information)

### **Head Start and Early Head Start**

Head Start and Early Head Start are federally and sometimes state funded full or part day programs that provide free early education and other services to help meet the health and school readiness needs of children in income eligible families. ((845) 452-4167)

### **Federal Earned income Tax Credit (EITC)**

You may be able to lower your taxes and even get money back if you qualify for the EITC. To qualify, you must be working full or part time and make less than a certain amount based on family size. You do not have to owe any taxes to get a refund using EITC. ([www.irs.gov/individuals/parents](http://www.irs.gov/individuals/parents))

### **Federal Child Tax Credit (CTC)**

If you have a dependent child under age 17, you may be eligible for the Child Tax Credit, which can be worth hundreds of dollars per child. The income eligibility for the CTC is much higher than for the Earned Income Tax Credit, but you still do not have to owe any taxes to use the Child Tax Credit. ([www.irs.gov/individuals/parents](http://www.irs.gov/individuals/parents))

### **Federal Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit**

If you have a child under the age of 13, pay for child care and owe federal income taxes, you may be eligible for this tax credit. ([www.irs.gov/individuals/parents](http://www.irs.gov/individuals/parents))

### **State Earned Income and Dependent Care Tax Credits**

Many states offer their own earned Income or Child and Dependent Care tax credits. These credits are similar to the federal ones. In some states, you do not have to owe any taxes to get the State Child and Dependent Care credit. You can get both federal and state Earned Income and Child and Dependent Care credits. ([www.otda.ny.gov/programs/tax-credits](http://www.otda.ny.gov/programs/tax-credits))

### **Dependent Care Assistance Programs (DCAPs)**

Your employer may offer a Dependent Care Assistance Program, which allows you to have up to \$5,000 a year deducted from your paycheck on a pre-tax basis. The money is placed in a special account to be used for child care tuition reimbursement. You should never put more money in this account than you will actually spend because you will lose unspent funds at the end of the year. You cannot claim any money you put in a DCAP for the Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit.

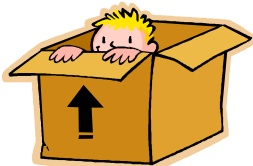
## Problems

Chances are you will find an arrangement that will provide a good experience for both you and your child, but there is always the possibility that problems will arise. These may be minor, such as misunderstandings between parent and caregiver, or they may be more serious, involving licensing violations, neglect or abuse.

**Here are some suggestions for dealing with problems as they arise:**

### Misunderstandings

The best course of action is prevention. From the very beginning, speak frankly with your caregiver. Make sure your expectations are clearly understood. Establish clear agreements in advance. Make it a habit to ask questions and talk with your caregiver on a daily basis about your child.



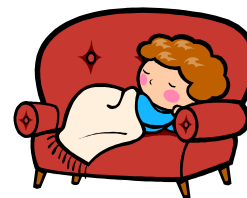
Even if you practice good communication techniques, misunderstandings may still arise. If there is a disagreement, talk directly with your caregiver and let him/her know that the issue is important to you. Be honest. If the problem is not easily resolved, talk with the referral specialist at the Child Care Council. If the conflict cannot be resolved, you may choose to seek another arrangement, but this should be a last resort.

### Adjustment Difficulties

The transition to a new child care program can be difficult for both parent and child. Your child will probably experience the pain of separation most acutely during the first week and even for longer than that. You may also feel uncomfortable with this separation. This is normal and healthy for both parent and child. Accept the fact that each of you needs time to get used to this new arrangement.

If, after a reasonable adjustment period (3 to 4 weeks), your child does not seem at ease with the care provider or environment, you may have cause for concern. Talk with the center director or provider. Ask for suggestions on how you can facilitate your child's adjustment. Share ideas about why the child may not be adjusting.

If your child begins to show signs of stress, such as unusual toileting accidents, disruption of eating and sleeping patterns or a strong unwillingness to be left with the provider, you may want to consider changing programs.



### Licensing Violations

You may discover that your child care program is not complying with licensing requirements and the violations appear to be serious. For the safety of all children, be sure to report any violations to the licensing authorities (Spring Valley Regional Office (845) 708-2400) and/or to the Child Care Council. It is through the responsible actions of parents that the quality of child care programs can be maintained. It is also the policy and the responsibility of the Child Care Council to report any and all violations. The referral service can also help you consider a new child care arrangement. If you have any questions or concerns please call us at (845) 473-4141.



### Child Abuse and Maltreatment

It is unlikely that you will encounter child abuse or maltreatment. However, don't rule out the possibility. If your child is reluctant to go to child care, there are many possible reasons. Listen to what your child says and take what he or she says seriously. Look for signs of stress in your child. If you do suspect abuse, do not hesitate to report it to the New York State Abuse and Maltreatment Register at 1-800-342-3720. Be sure to also inform the referral service of your suspicion.

#### **REMEMBER**


**The key to good child care is informed parents who are involved in their children's programs.**

## Special Considerations

### Preparing Your Child for Child Care

Your child's transition to child care will be smoother if you prepare your child ahead of time. If your child is old enough to understand, explain what will happen and when. Go over the details of the routine and activities. Visit the program beforehand with your child, several times if possible. Be aware of your own feelings. Your child will be able to perceive your level of confidence and comfort with the program and will likely feel the same way. When you do leave your child, always say good-bye and state that you will return and when. Never try to sneak away.

### What's the Right Age to Start?

 There is no right or wrong answer to this question. It depends upon many things. Research suggests that the most important factor is, of course, the quality of care. An infant will thrive if all its needs are being met. Another important factor is how comfortable the parent is about returning to work. If a parent feels good about working and the spouse is supportive of this action, chances are good that the child will have a successful adjustment to child care even if that child is a young infant.

In making your decision about when to begin child care, it may be helpful to know that there is a stage in an infant's development when anxiety over separation is somewhat higher than at other stages. Between the ages of 7 and 15 months, infants become acutely aware of the difference between parents and strangers. They cannot yet understand that when you leave their sight you are not gone forever. Some babies at this stage will become upset when their parents leave the room, even at home. Some experts believe that adjustment to child care would be less stressful if care was started before this period.

Whenever you start your infant in care, expect that the separation will be painful for both of you. Give yourself and your baby time to get used to it.

### Sick Child Care


Children regularly get sick throughout the year. For working parents, these illnesses can cause enormous difficulties. They come at unexpected and inconvenient times.

Be prepared. Well in advance, arrange a back-up child care plan for those days that your child must stay home. The back-up plan should consist of several alternatives. Talk to friends, neighbors, co-workers and your current care provider to get the names of people who could be called with little notice to provide occasional care for a sick child. Check these people out ahead of time. Talk with the referral service about specific programs in the area that care for sick children.

If you have a spouse, consider taking turns to be home with your child.



### Children with Special Needs

 The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guarantees children with disabilities the opportunity to participate in all activities of community life, including attending child care. Although child care programs welcome children with disabilities, it doesn't mean that all child care settings will work for you. You need to look for a setting that suits the special needs of your child and a provider with whom you are comfortable. If your child requires medication while in care, you need to use a program that is approved to administer medication. Special needs children have the same basic needs as all children. Talk with the Referral Specialist at the Child Care Council about the care requirements for your child. They can help you locate a program that can adequately meet your child's needs.

### Child with Special Health Care Needs

All regulated child care centers, family child care homes and school age programs **must be approved** in order to administer medication to children in their care, or have an emergency medication waiver.

#### In choosing a program for your child please ask yourself:

- ⇒ Do you want your child to be able to receive medication like Tylenol when they develop a fever while in care?
- ⇒ Does your child occasionally require an antibiotic that might need to be given while in care?
- ⇒ Does your child have allergies that might require the use of an epi-pen while in care?
- ⇒ Does your child have asthma that might require use of an inhaler while in care?
- ⇒ Does your child take medication on an on-going basis that would need to be given while in care?

If the answer to any of these questions in YES, you'll need to find a child care program that is approved to administer medication. Not all programs or providers are approved to administer medications. Ask to see the program's registration or license. This will indicate if they are allowed to administer medications.

## **Additional Resources**

The Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam, Inc. has additional information available about local resources for Dutchess and Putnam counties including:

- School districts
- Libraries
- Human services
- Food banks
- Etc.

Check out our website ([www.childcaredutchess.org](http://www.childcaredutchess.org)), call us (845) 473-4141 or e-mail us at [info@childcaredutchess.org](mailto:info@childcaredutchess.org) for more information.

### **Call 211 Hudson Valley Region United Way helpline.**

It's a resource that people can call about everything from basic needs like food, clothing and shelter, to volunteer opportunities, legal services, drug treatment, employment support, child care, elder care and more.



### **Any Concerns?**

If in visiting providers or in utilizing their services, you have concerns about the conditions or the quality of care, do not hesitate to bring this to the attention of the Child Care Council at (845) 473-4141 and/or the New York State Office of Children and Family Services at (845) 708-2400.

If you are dissatisfied with the services you have received from the Child Care Council, please call the Executive Director at (845) 473-4141 x 213 to express your concern.

## Questions to Ask:

### Center Care:



- Have there been any licensing violations found in the last few years? If so, of what nature were the violations? Have they been corrected?
- Ask if meals are provided. Ask for a sample menu.
- What are the fees? How often do the fees change? Is there a deposit required? Do you pay for sick days, vacations or national holidays? Is there a late pick-up fee?
- Is there opportunity for parent involvement? In what way?
- How is information concerning the child exchanged between staff and parents?
- What is the Director's background and how long has he/she been Director?
- How many staff members are present in each class? How many children are there in class?
- What kind of training do the teachers have? Is additional training required?
- How much staff turnover has there been over the past year?
- How do they handle behavior problems? What method of discipline is used with children that misbehave?
- Are the children required to wash their hands before snack and lunch?
- Are parents allowed to visit their children at any time?
- Ask for parent references. Is there anything you would change about the program?



### Family Based Child Care:



- How many children does the provider care for each day? Is the group stable or are there different children each day?
- How much does the provider charge? Will you be expected to pay for sick days, vacations, holidays or late pick-up?
- Ask if meals are provided. Is the provider participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)?
- Does the provider take a vacation or take off certain holidays?
- How long has the provider been doing family day care? How long do they expect to continue?
- Will the provider give you the names and telephone numbers of parents who have used his/her care in the past or are now using it?
- Does the provider ever leave the children in someone else's care? If so, ask about these other persons.
- What other adults are likely to be at home during day care hours?
- What is the provider's previous job experience and educational background?
- Does the provider take the children on field trips or otherwise transport them in the car?
- Does the provider participate in on-going trainings?
- What is a typical day like in the provider's day care program?
- How does the provider handle a child's misbehavior? How does the provider handle a child who is upset?



### In-Home Providers:



If you are interviewing someone to come into your home to take care of your child, your questions will be slightly different. Of all forms of care, in-home care comes under the least scrutiny, so you will want to be very thorough. You are assuming the role of employer and must verify for yourself those things that an administrator of a center asks of prospective employees.

In New York State, when interviewing an in-home child care provider, it is not legal to ask questions concerning race, color, national origin or marital status. You may obtain NYS criminal history record, credit history report, education and NYS driving records. Ask the referral service for information about Kieran's Law.

This handbook has been prepared for parents by the  
Child Care Council of Dutchess and Putnam, Inc.,  
which is solely responsible for its content.

**Dutchess County Office:**

70 Overocker Road  
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601  
Phone: (845) 473-4141  
Fax: (845) 473-4161

**Putnam County Office:**

**Office Location:**

110 Old Route 6, Building #3  
Carmel, NY 10512

**Mailing Address**

P.O. Box 1029  
Carmel, NY 10512  
Phone: (845) 808-1659  
Fax: (845) 225-1279

[www.childcaredutchess.org](http://www.childcaredutchess.org)

**The Child Care Council has additional information available on child development concerns,  
public resources, parenting classes or workshops. Call us or check our website.**