



QUICK GUIDE for Parents in Montgomery County, MD How to Find High-Quality Child Care

Working parents looking for child care typically have to think about four big factors: cost, location, hours of operation, and quality. **Quality is important because all early care is also early education.** The research is clear: the years from birth to age 5 are critical to a child's future success in school and in life.

According to the Maryland Division of Early Childhood, here is what high-quality child care looks like:

- The child care providers are responsive to the needs of each child.
- There are open, supportive and engaging experiences for children.
- Interactions between providers and children are warm and positive.
- Learning opportunities are developmentally appropriate, interactive and plentiful.
- Health, safety and welfare are absolute priorities.



High-quality early care is important because the first five years are a critical time in every child's development.



Tips for Making the Most of a Site Visit

Visit alone first, without children.

This makes it easier to stay focused and pay attention to all areas of the program.

Bring questions and take notes.

There is a lot to take in during a visit. The amount of information can be overwhelming. Come to each visit with a "wish list" and questions.

Ask about the program's philosophy and beliefs about child development.

Do they believe children learn by doing? Do they nurture each child's social and emotional growth? Do the teachers plan hands-on learning activities that help advance cognitive skills?

LOCATE: Child Care

This is a **free referral service** with information on regulated child care in Maryland. Trained referral specialists help parents find care based on personal preferences including program type, location, and cost. Referrals are provided for Child Care Centers, Family Child Care Homes, nursery schools, Head Start programs, before/after school programs, and summer programs.

Call 877-261-0060 to speak with a LOCATE counselor.

**Servicio especial en español
Llame a LOCATE: Child Care
al 800-999-0120**

español@marylandfamilynetwork.org

For children with special needs or disabilities:

**LOCATE: Child Care Special Needs Service
800-999-0120**

specialneeds@marylandfamilynetwork.org

Looking for child care in DC, Virginia, or another state? You can search for your local Child Care Resource & Referral agency here:

ChildCareAware.org/ccrr-search-form

Rating and accreditation programs are also helpful when assessing quality.

These programs are voluntary, but are good indicators to ask about when looking for high-quality child care programs.

Maryland EXCELS promotes quality by awarding ratings to Child Care Centers, Family Child Care Homes, School-Age Child Care Programs, and Public Prekindergarten programs. Parents can search for ratings using the web tool at marylandexcels.org, or by using the app available for Android or Apple smartphones. Search the Google Play or iTunes store for **Maryland EXCELS Quality Finder**.

Maryland Accreditation is administered by the Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Early Education. It is available to Licensed Child Care Centers and Public Prekindergarten (PreK) programs. Earning this accreditation demonstrates that a program has met high standards beyond those required for state licensing.

National Accreditation for Family Child Care: Parents considering a licensed Family Child Care Home should ask about NAFCC accreditation, which is the only national accreditation standard for Family Child Care Homes recognized by the Maryland State Department of Education.

NAEYC Accreditation is offered by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, a professional membership organization that promotes high-quality early learning for all children, birth to age 8.

For more about high-quality child care and related resources, visit ecetoolkit.org/resources/parents

Early Care & Education Toolkit
for **EMPLOYERS**