



CHILD CARE NAVIGATION TIPS

Just like you'd plan out a project, you should create a written child care plan. Here are some best practices to help:

- Locate child care facilities or family/friends in your location that are a good match for your schedule, age and needs of your child, and family.
- Schedule and allow time to visit various child care settings, when they are open, as soon as you know you may need child care.
- Sign-up on waiting lists right away when you know your specific needs.
- Have a back-up plan such as a family member or friend that can assist with transportation, care, or help out if something happens to your primary child care plan. Shift changes, overtime, school or child care closures, and sick children are a few examples.
- Communicate regularly and early with your child care provider if there are anticipated changes to your schedule, so your child can continue to have consistent care. Most providers are willing to make accommodations, if possible and if they have sufficient notice.
- Think of your providers as partners in your child's development. They want the best for your child and you will need good communication, so they know how to work together with your family.



About us

The Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council Child Care in the Trades Subcommittee brings together stakeholders from the trades that include workers, employers, and policy makers as well as workforce leaders, childcare workforce agencies, and advocates to create a more equitable and effective child care system for Washington's skilled trades workers.



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Navigating the child care system in Washington State

Learn about the two types of child care, frequently asked questions, and find child care providers near you.

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Two types of child care:

LICENSED CHILD CARE

These child care settings include licensed child care centers and licensed family child care homes. Each provider must receive and maintain their license with the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families. They must also follow regulations and standards that can be found in Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 110-300.

Licensed family homes are more likely to be able to accommodate non-standard hour care before 6 a.m. and after 6 p.m. on weekdays and weekend care.

Both licensed family homes and centers may include transportation to and from school, when needed.

Fees tend to be by the month, in order for the provider to hold the spot for the family.

INFORMAL CHILD CARE

This category includes unlicensed pre-K schools that operate for four hours or less for children 3–5 years old; family, friend, and neighbor care; and nanny care.

Family, friend, and neighbor providers may only care for the child in the child's home, if the provider is not a relative. If the provider is a relative, they may care for the child in the provider's home or in the child's home.

This type of care is flexible. The family and provider would need to work out transportation options for the child if coming from another child care provider, from school, or from another setting.

Family, friend, and neighbor care is more likely to accommodate non-standard work hours (before 6 a.m., after 6 p.m., and weekends).

Fees tend to be hourly but can be mutually arranged by the month.

Frequently asked questions:

What ages are accepted in child care?

Washington's child care ages are from 4 weeks to 12 years. If a child has special needs, child care can be extended past 12 years of age.

How long can my child be in child care?

There is no restriction on how long a child can be in child care. Families and child care providers work out the hours and schedule that best meets the needs of both parties. The only limitation is that licensed facilities must adhere to the adult to child ratios required by law.

What if my schedule changes/I work overtime?

If your schedule changes, your child can stay in a child care facility as long as the provider is able to accommodate the change. There is no prohibition to this accommodation beyond the regulations and operating policies of the child care facility such as maintaining safe adult to child ratios and the facility being able to stay open. You should always arrange for back-up care and transportation in case the facility is not able to accommodate your schedule change.

Why is childcare so expensive?

Child care facilities are required to follow hundreds of regulations, established by Washington State, to reduce unsafe situations and to support the best practices for children in care. That includes limiting the number of children in a licensed facility and requiring a small child-to-adult ratio. Staff are the biggest expense, so providers must charge enough to pay staff wages and benefits and to maintain a safe care environment.

Together, the labor movement and child care advocates are fighting for financial help for families, so that no family pays more than 7% of their income on child care. Contact your local union to find out how you can help.

Scan to watch a short video:



Finding child care:



Carina – carina.org

A FREE online matching service of union family home providers across Washington and in several other states.

Child Care Aware – childcareaware.org

An organization where families can find child care facilities in their location.

Child Care Check – findchildcarewa.org

A state database of licensed facilities for families to check for information about providers they are considering using.

Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) – washingtonconnection.org

Low-income families may qualify for child care subsidies. Income requirement levels change, please call to see if you qualify. Not all providers accept the state paid subsidy. WCCC is best for families with a fairly stable schedule.

Apply for WCCC by contacting the Child Care Subsidy Contact Center at 1-844-626-8687 or online at washingtonconnection.org.

Other types of child care

- Emergency sick child care: Various hospitals provide this service, however it is expensive and not very widespread
- Drop-in child care center: There is no directory available of this kind of care, but they do exist.
- Employer-based child care center: These are very rare, insufficient for the need, and most have long waiting lists, if they exist.