

## Before You Start Your Search

Below are some questions you may want to consider before you start your search for child care or preschool. They will help you narrow down what type of child care or preschool is best for your family and can help you to explain your needs to a potential program or provider.

<p>What <i>type</i> of child care and preschool would best fit the needs of my family?</p>	<p>Below are the types of child care and preschool settings that are licensed in Michigan:</p> <p><b>Child Care &amp; Preschool Centers</b> – A center (a building that usually includes multiple rooms and/or classrooms) where early learning and care is provided. This includes, child care, preschool, nursery school, Head Start and Great Start Readiness Programs</p> <p><b>Family Child Care Homes</b> – A home where early learning and care can be provided for up to six children.</p> <p><b>Group Child Care Homes</b> – A home where early learning and care can be provided for up to 12 children.</p>		
When do I need child care or preschool?	Early mornings?	Different times each day?	2 <sup>nd</sup> or 3 <sup>rd</sup> shift?
How much can I afford to spend per week?			
Do I qualify for assistance paying for child care or preschool?	Call your Great Start to Quality Resource Center to find out: 1-877-614-7328.		
What is the ideal location for child care or preschool?	Walking distance?	Close to home?	Close to work?
Do I need transportation for my child?	Some child care or preschool facilities provide pick-up and drop-off. Others provide transportation from the care facility to school. If you <b>need</b> transportation this is an important consideration.		

## When You Call A Provider or Program

Below are some questions you may want to ask when you call the program or provider for the first time. Try to avoid calling during peak hours, during drop-off (generally between 7 AM-9AM), pick-up (generally 3PM-6PM) and lunch time (generally 11:30AM-1:30PM), so that you can have a conversation with the Director or owner. Some providers may offer to send you information or may request that you come in talk about your questions or ask to arrange a different time to call, don't be put off if they cannot answer your questions right then!

### Licensing Questions

What ages are you licensed for?	
What licensing violations, if any have you had? What did you do to make the correction?	

### Availability

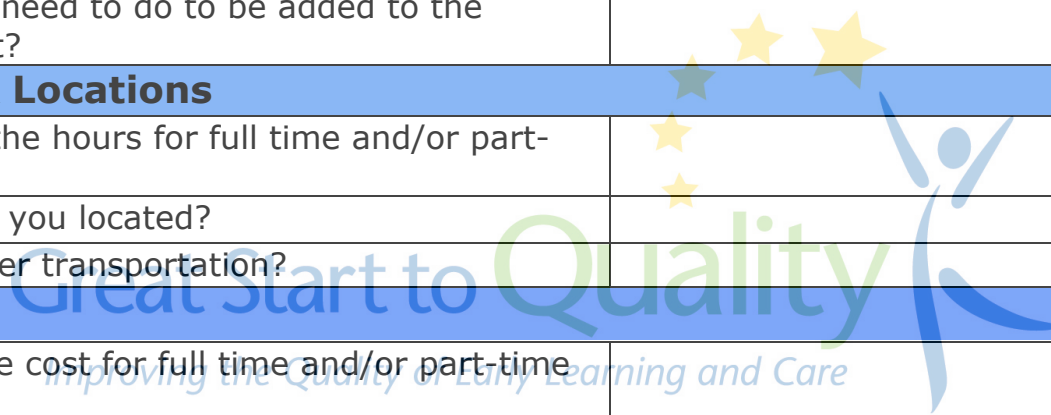
Are there any openings?	
Is there a waiting list?	
What do I need to do to be added to the waiting list?	

### Hours & Locations

What are the hours for full time and/or part-time ?	
Where are you located?	
Do you offer transportation?	

### Cost

What is the cost for full time and/or part-time care?	
Do you have fees? What do they include?	
Do you accept state subsidy?	
Do you offer scholarships?	
Do you offer sibling discounts?	
Is there still a charge if my child stays home sick or is on vacation?	



## Finding the Highest Quality Care

Michigan has a quality rating and improvement system, called Great Start to Quality. This voluntary quality assurance system helps parents make educated choices in finding the highest quality setting for their child. Each category in this section is one of the standards for Great Start to Quality. Next to each you'll find a brief explanation of what the standard means.

To learn more visit: [www.greatstarttoquality.org](http://www.greatstarttoquality.org)

**Are you participating in Great Start to Quality?** If so, what was your rating? Why not?

**Staff Qualifications and Professional Development** What type of education and experience do the teacher and staff have? Are they still pursuing new ideas/knowledge?

Do lead teachers have a Bachelor's Degree, Child Development Associate (CDA) or other credential?

Are all of your staff certified in First Aid and CPR?

**Administration and Management** What is done to help ensure continuing education, retention of staff and other factors that lead to higher quality care of children?

Do you have a parent handbook?

Where are program policies posted?

**Family and Community Partnerships** how are families & the community engaged and involved?

How will I know my about my child's development?

How do you communicate with parents?

**Environment** How does the program or provider ensure your child is safe? Do you feel your child would be safe, stimulated and well cared for? This includes things like: hygiene, teacher to child ratios, and other health related pieces.

What is your child to teacher ratio?

Do you participate in the food program?

**Curriculum and Instruction** What routines, education curriculums and assessments are in place to ensure that children feel safe, can predict their days and grow in meaningful ways?

What is the normal daily schedule?

Do you use a curriculum? What is it?

## When You Visit A Program or Provider

Below are some questions that can help guide you during your visit at a center, family child care home or group child care home. If you didn't ask all the questions you wanted to from the **When You Call** list, bring that too! Asking questions will help you get a better picture of what the program/provider has to offer. If a provider is unwilling to answer questions that may not be a good sign and likely means you need to consider how to best gain the information you need to feel comfortable making a choice.

**It's okay to be picky.** Don't forget YOU know what is best for your child and what will work best for your family! If your gut tells you "this is not the place" don't ignore it. If you don't get the answers you're looking for, keep looking. Your child needs you to assure their safety, health and early learning are well looked after, especially when you cannot be there. Need more help or want to talk it over with someone? There are resources listed at the bottom of this checklist to help you.

### Curriculum and Instruction

What activities are offered during the day?

- High-quality child care and preschool programs/providers offer a balance of active and quiet times; opportunities for children to make choices; times for larger groups, smaller groups and individual space; regular schedules that allow for flexibility
- High-quality child care and preschool programs/providers offer lots of time for exploration – infants need a safe space with room to explore, interact, learn, and move; toddlers need a space where they can actively explore, interact, and learn; preschoolers need a space with a lot of choices to explore independently and interact with others
- School age programs/providers need to offer more than time for homework - school age children need time to relax after the school day; opportunity for physical activity; thinking games and activities



What goals do you have for children? I would like to see the curriculum you use.

Will my child have the same staff member as their lead teacher each day?

Are class schedules and menus posted?

Are daily objectives posted?

How often do the children go outside?

Do you take children on field trips or other types of

Do you take children on field trips or other types of off-site experiences?	
Will my child watch TV or use any other screens? For how long, can I opt out?	
<b>Family and Community Partnership</b>	
What is the cost of attendance? How do you handle vacation or sick time?	
How will I learn about my child's day? Who do I tell if I have a concern?	
Do you provide care for children with special needs and/or special medical needs? If yes, does the staff have experience and/or specialized training?	
Do I need to provide diapers/wipes/formula? Anything else?	
Does my child need to be toilet trained? Will you assist in toilet training?	
<i>Does the toilet and/or changing table appear clean? Do you notice any unpleasant smells?</i>	
Can my child bring a comfort item and blanket?	
How does naptime work? Where will the children nap?	
<b>Environment</b>	
Do you have established emergency plans; do you practice them? How often?	
<i>Do you SEE the emergency plan and evacuation routes posted?</i>	
Do you provide food? If yes, may I see a sample menu??	
Are you participating in any sponsored food programs?	
Do you make accommodations for allergies, religious exemptions, etc.?	
Do you have any animals that my child will come into contact with?	
Is smoking allowed at any time?	
Will anyone other than teachers and staff be present?	Volunteers?   Other family members?
Does the outdoor area and equipment appear safe and interesting? Is there enough equipment for all of the children to play?	
<b>Staff &amp; Program</b>	
What licensing violations, if any, have you had? What did you do to make the correction?	
What qualifications/education does your staff have?	

How do you handle staff absences?	
<b>Things to look for:</b>	
Do the children seem happy?	
Does the staff seem warm, friendly, calm and gentle? Do they call the children by name?	
Do you see toys, materials and activities your child would enjoy?	
Do children have free access to materials or do they need to ask?	
What is the cleanliness of general area, floor, surfaces like?	
Are there windows that let in natural light?	
Do you notice any unpleasant smells?	
Do you see teachers and staff washing their hands and children's hands?	
Where is the food prepared? Does it look and smell appetizing?	
Do you see food your child would like to eat, does the food look healthy?	
Do the teachers and staff eat with the children?	

