



If you need to find care for your child, one possibility is a family child care home. This type of care is generally provided in a private home, often times by the parent of a small child or two. A family child care home may offer a more relaxed, home-like style of care than a center, with more flexible schedule and a less formal relationship with parents.

Family child care providers are much more than babysitters. They should provide all the safety, warmth, and learning opportunities as a child care center but do it in a home environment. Check your state's regulations to find the number of children that can be cared for in a family child care home. In Massachusetts, a provider may have up to 6, 8 or 10 children depending on the type of license they hold. There are additional regulations a provider with a license of over 6 must adhere to. Talk to your R&R family specialist for specific information.

When choosing a family child care home, it is important to find a setting with which you are comfortable. The provider should share your attitudes and values about children. Plan to visit the home to talk and observe them with the children. To find a family child care home use the Child Care Circuit [online referral system](#) or find the CCR&R for your city and town at www.masschildcare.org

Practical Considerations:

1. Name/and address/phone number of home
2. Hour's provider is open
3. Fees charged
4. Ages of children cared for
5. Care of sick children?
6. Location easy to reach?

For the following items, use a rating of:

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| 0 | Can't tell |
| 1 | No, not in the home |
| 2 | Somewhat |
| 3 | Yes, in the home |

Physical Facility/Health, Safety

- The home is reasonably clean and orderly.
- No children are seen with soiled diapers or training pants.
- Detergents, cleaners, and medicines are in a locked cabinet.
- Electrical outlets are covered with safety caps.
- Household items like knives, scissors, curling irons are stored out of reach of children.
- Toys and equipment are in good repair with no sharp edges, splinters, or loose parts.
- There is a quiet area that can be darkened for naps with clean bedding for each child.
- The toileting area is easy for the children to get to with potty chairs, safe steps, or whatever is needed.
- There is an area of the home where children can play out of the way of other family members.
- There is a fenced, outdoor play area in which the caregiver can see all areas of the yard easily.
- The home is warm, cheerful, and inviting.

Caregiver Competencies

- The caregiver spends time with the children rather than ignoring them to carry out household duties or talk on the telephone.
- The caregiver provides individual attention when needed. For example, an upset child is held, talked to, etc.
- You can see the caregiver praising the children, for example, saying, "You did a good job hanging up your coat."

- You can see the caregiver communicating effectively with the children, explaining in clear steps what she/he wants the children to do, answering children's questions patiently, frequently bending or kneeling down to the child's level when talking.
- The children appear happy, comfortable, and relaxed - laughing, smiling, involved in play.
- The children enjoy one another - smile at each other, hold hands, hug, help each other more than they fight or argue.
- The caregiver uses the children's first names or nicknames when talking to or about them. She/he does not refer to the children by unpleasant names, such as "smarty" or "brat" etc.
- The caregiver seems warm and affectionate with the children, smiling, cuddling, and speaking pleasantly.
- The caregiver encourages children to do some things for themselves, patiently giving time, help, and praise so that the child can learn to master the skill, such as getting a drink, washing hands, putting away a toy.
- The caregiver holds infants when feeding them rather than propping up their bottles.
- The caregiver talks to infants, cuddles, and plays with them during the day. Infants are not left alone for long periods.
- The caregiver is a person you would like your child to copy or imitate. In other words, children are apt to "do as the caregiver does, more than what she/he says."

Program Materials

- Attractive and well-written story and picture books are available for the children.
- The caregiver encourages listening and talking through planned activities like storytelling, word games, and doll playing.
- The home has materials for quiet play, such as puzzles, and active play, such as riding toys.
- Children can get at least some materials for themselves, and they are encouraged to take care of the materials and put them away when finished.
- There are enough toys and materials so that each child can play without having to wait more than a few minutes.
- The caregiver encourages both boys and girls to play with all the materials - such as riding toys, dress-up clothes, dolls, cars, and trucks. Caregivers do not give children the idea that a certain activity is only for boys or only for girls.
- Children sometimes can use creative materials, such as crayons, big blank pieces of paper rather than coloring books, paste, clay or play dough, scissors, pencils, etc.
- Three or more of the following toys are available for the children's use: large and small riding toys, pull toys, pounding toys, beads for stringing, puzzles, small and large blocks, nested toys, small building toys like Tinkertoys.
- Children may watch only appropriate television programs and are not forced or encouraged to sit in front of the TV for long periods.
- The caregiver plans at least one activity for the children each day that your child would enjoy.

Home-Child Care Coordination

- The caregiver can tell you what meals and snacks will be served to the children this week.
- The menus sound nutritious and contain foods your child likes.
- If you have an infant, the caregiver refrigerates infant bottles and foods and will feed according to your directions.
- If possible, ask what the caregiver does if a child does not like a certain food being served to see if you agree with his/her method.
- The caregiver uses discipline and guidance methods similar to your own and is consistent and fair with the children.
- The caregiver answers questions in a friendly, open way.
- You feel comfortable and could expect to share concerns about your child with the caregivers.

Total Score _____

Your Comments and Thoughts

1. Overall, how do you feel about this home?

2. Overall, how would your child feel about this place?

The total score reflects both how good or poor the program is via your judgement, factual information and how much you were able to observe. In general, go by the following:

100-123 points - **EXCELLENT PROGRAM**, worth getting on a waiting list to enroll your child.

80-100 points - **GOOD PROGRAM**, worth serious consideration.

60-80 points - **POSSIBLY ADEQUATE**, think this over carefully though.

40-60 points - **LOOK ELSEWHERE**.

0-40 points - **DEFINITELY OUT**, probably in violation of licensing requirements.

If you have a lot of items on the checklist with 0 points because you were not able to tell, then this will lower the overall score a lot. In this case, look at how you scored the rest of the items.

If most of your other scores are "3's", then this could be a very good program despite the fact that the total score is lower than it should be.

The above is meant to be **a guide only** and is **not meant to be a recommendation** of any kind. Above all, trust your own judgment and feeling about a program. You know your child best and can tell which program will be right for your family.