

Family Education Packet

Quality Child Care

Information and resources to help ensure your children are safe, healthy, and successful learners.



Missouri's Early Care & Education Connections

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How Do I Find Child Care?

United 4 Children can help parents and guardians find and choose child care and education services that meet their needs.

You can check out our searchable child care database by scanning the QR code below or visiting: united4children.org/resource-and-referral/



Connect with United 4 Children’s Community Support Specialists:

Call: 1-866-583-2392

Email: programresources@united4children.org

Hours of Operation: 8 a.m.-10 p.m. Monday – Friday
12-5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday

What Types of Child Care and Home Visiting Options are Available?

Child Care

Choosing care for your children is an important decision and there are many options available. Learn more about the differences between each type of child care setting below to see which is best for your family.

Licensed Facilities: These facilities meet minimum health and safety standards.

- **A Family Child Care Home:** In this option, the person providing care is licensed as a family child care home provider. Care may be given in a home owned by the care provider, or it may be given in a home owned by another legal entity. Child care providers are limited to no more than 10 children for any part of the 24-hour day and are licensed to operate only one child care home at a time.
- **A Group Child Care Home:** In these programs, a person licensed as a group child care home provider is the individual providing care, meaning they can care for 20 or fewer children for any part of the 24-hour day. A group child care home may be in a location other than the provider's permanent residence or separate from the provider's living quarters. The provider may be licensed to operate no more than one group child care home at a time.
- **A Child Care Center:** In these centers, the child care program is held in a location other than the provider's permanent residence or living quarters. Care is provided for children for any part of the 24-hour day. The center can be owned by the child care provider or by another legal entity.
 - **Early Head Start Programs:** These free, federally funded programs are designed to nurture healthy attachments between parent and children (and children and caregiver). These program services can encompass the full range of a family's needs from pregnancy to a child's third birthday. Families must meet income eligibility requirements to participate. For more information scan the QR code below or visit: eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/programs/article/early-head-start-programs



- **Head Start Programs:** These free, federally funded programs promote school readiness for children ages 3-5. Enrolled children and families receive wraparound support to fulfill their needs and high-quality early childhood education. Like Early Head Start programs, families must meet income eligibility requirements for children to participate. For more information scan the QR code below or visit: eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/programs/article/head-start-programs



License-Exempt Facilities: These facilities are not licensed by the Office of Childhood (OOC).

- **License-Exempt Programs Operated by a Religious Organization:** These are organizations, like churches, synagogues, mosques, or other entities, that qualify for federal tax exemption status as a not-for-profit religious organization. Child care operations that are located on real estate used for religious purposes are also license-exempt, even if operated by another entity.
- **License-Exempt Nursery School:** These are educational programs for preschool-age children operated for no more than four hours per child per day.
- **SOF (Six or Fewer) Family Homes:** These operations provide care for six or fewer children, usually for family, friends, or neighbors in their communities. While these programs are not licensed, if they are approved to receive child care subsidy then they are visited by a representative of the OOC to ensure they meet minimum safety standards.

Home Visiting

Another option for families to ensure their children are safe, healthy, and successful learners is enrollment in a home visiting program. Home visitors can offer a variety of services, which include:

- Home visits provided by a trained home visitor to cultivate and strengthen nurturing parent-child relationships, promote healthy childhood growth and development, and enhance family functioning by reducing risk and building protective factors.
- Group connections or group meetings that allow for parent-child interactions, increase knowledge of ways to support child development, and provide an opportunity to practice parenting skills in a group setting.
- Annual developmental screenings on the individual growth and development of the child.
- Resource networks that provide families with connections to information and services available in the community to support them.

To learn more about the different types of home visiting models, please scan the QR code below, or visit: dese.mo.gov/childhood/home-visiting



What Does Quality Child Care Look Like?

Missouri's Early Learning Standards

What children need to thrive depends on their age and development. High-quality care can look different for each age group, but there are some similarities across age groups. The Missouri Early Learning Standards (MELS) provide a description of the skills children can build upon from infancy to kindergarten. The standards include activities that offer adults ways to support children in mastering a skill or knowledge area. A high-quality facility would use the MELS to guide their instruction and activities for all their children.

Learn more about the Missouri Early Learning Standards by scanning the QR code below or visiting: dese.mo.gov/media/pdf/missouri-early-learning-standards



Quality Care for Infants

Infants, aged zero to 18 months, learn best through interactive relationships with caring adults. They also learn best through active, hands-on play that connects new ideas to what they already know and play that allows them to explore and make sense of the world around them. Therefore, a high-quality child care setting for infants embeds opportunities throughout the day for infants to learn through these various ways. High-quality programs for infants provide a safe place for infants to develop their physical, cognitive, language, and social and emotional skills.

Quality Care for Toddlers

Toddlers grow quickly, constantly exploring the world around them and developing skills they need to thrive. Toddlers, children ages 16 to 36 months, learn best through positive relationships with caring adults, active hands-on play, and connecting new ideas to what they already know. High-quality programs for toddlers use developmentally-appropriate practices to give toddlers opportunities to try new skills and challenge themselves.

Quality Care for Preschoolers

High-quality preschools encourage children to develop positive relationships with their teachers and each other. The curriculum is based on what most preschoolers should know and be able to do, such as reading, expressing their feelings and needs, using scissors, and recognizing numbers. High-quality programs for preschoolers support children's interests, skills, and knowledge.

Quality Afterschool for Kindergartners, First, Second, and Third Graders

Kindergartners, first, second, and third graders are ready to take on learning challenges. They learn important skills and knowledge that will serve as a foundation for future learning.

High-quality afterschool care for kindergartners through third grade offers opportunities for active exploration and hands-on activities, connects new information to what children already know, and supports their social and emotional development. Afterschool care should provide experiences that stretch and challenge your children’s minds and opportunities for them to ask questions, share what they learned, and share ideas.

Additionally, before and afterschool programs offer academic enrichment activities that complement the children’s regular school day program. They offer student learning opportunities, tutoring, homework help, and more.

Indicators of Quality for Child Care Settings

Licensing Status & Quality

Licensing does not guarantee quality child care, but it does set minimum health and safety requirements. Licensing requires that child care programs be monitored to make sure they continue to meet the requirements. To learn more about the licensing process, scan the QR code below, or visit: <https://dese.mo.gov/childhood/child-care/rules-laws>



Accreditation Status & Quality

Child care centers, family child care homes, and school-age programs can choose to receive accreditation from various agencies. Each agency has its own standards that the programs must meet in order to receive accreditation. To learn more about these accrediting agencies, scan the QR code below or visit:

dese.mo.gov/childhood/child-care-subsidy/accrediting-organizations



Quality Assurance Report (QAR) Participation

The OOC developed the following draft definition of quality: Children and families, regardless of setting or funding source, receive care, education, and/or services in safe and culturally sensitive environments in which qualified and well-trained early childhood professionals:

- Build genuine relationships and engage with them in an emotionally supportive manner.
- Support children’s learning and development through engaging language and interactions as well as culturally and developmentally appropriate activities.
- Tailor their support, as appropriate, to best meet the needs of children and families.

- Connect families to other programs and services as appropriate.

By utilizing a child-centered framework, Quality Assurance Report (QAR) is designed to recognize the quality of early care and education programs throughout the state of Missouri, provide families with meaningful, relevant information about quality programs, and support programs through continuous quality improvement efforts.

Early care and education programs are recognized for their strengths and families are able to make informed choices in the care and education of their children that best meets their needs.

Research shows that high quality early care and education experiences provide the foundation for successful, life-long learners. It is important that we think about the quality of the settings and environments where children are playing and learning, and what children need in those settings, in order to be successful in their everyday life and later in school.

Learn more by scanning the QR code below or visiting:

<https://dese.mo.gov/childhood/quality-programs/quality-assurance-report>



What Does Child Care Cost?

Child care costs differ throughout the state and vary based on the age of the children. For instance, infants require more employees per child to ensure safety standards are met. That means there is a higher cost for early educators to work with infants. A recent study conducted by the Economic Policy Institute found that the average child care costs in Missouri are \$837 per month for infants and \$584 per month for four-year-old children.

To see the average child care subsidy rate for your county, scan the QR code below or visit:

<https://apps.dss.mo.gov/childcarerates/>



What if I Need Help Paying for Child Care?

How Can the Child Care Subsidy Assistance Program Help?

The DESE's OOC partners with child care providers to offer subsidized care through the Child Care Subsidy Program. The Child Care Subsidy Program's goal is to increase access to early childhood programs across the state by assisting eligible parents and guardians with payments

for child care in Missouri. By helping families with the cost of child care, families can focus on finding and holding steady jobs and attending school or training programs. Child care providers are contracted with DESE to receive payment for caring for subsidy-eligible children in their program.

Within the subsidy program, your family may pay a sliding fee, and possibly a co-payment, depending on tuition cost and subsidy amount. A sliding fee means that your family size and income is used to determine the portion of the child care cost your family is responsible for paying. Co-payment is what is left of the cost of care after the subsidy payment and sliding fee have been applied.

Applying for Subsidy & DESE's Child Care Data System

The Child Care Data System (CCDS) is DESE's 24/7 web-based system for child care subsidy.

- Current families participating in DESE's child care subsidy program can connect their information to an online account through CCDS to edit and view their subsidy information in near real-time.
- Families who want to learn more about child care assistance can also use CCDS to complete a quick pre-screening to see if they qualify for subsidy.
- Families who qualify for child care assistance will be able to choose and change their child care provider within CCDS.

To learn more about CCDS, connect/update your current subsidy information, or apply for child care assistance, you can call 573-415-8605 or visit the website and create an account at:

<https://childcare.mo.gov/s/parent-landing>

