

Selecting Summer Care for School-Age Children: A Quality Checklist



WHEN IT'S TIME TO SELECT SUMMER CARE FOR SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN, there are many factors to consider. Use this checklist of questions as a guide for ensuring that you and your child have a safe and productive summer! Take time to learn about each summer care program you are considering. Many options exist, including school-based programs, parks and recreation, churches, youth service agencies, family child care homes, specialty camps, child care centers and more. Make sure your decision is a **QUALITY** decision for you and your child.

What to look for when selecting a summer camp or program:

What are the program's health, safety, and nutrition policies and procedures?

Ask about the sign-in/sign-out policies, medication policy, discipline policy, lifeguard certification/water safety policy, field trip and transportation policies, handling of sick children, and missing children policy. Ask if the program follows any established nutritional guidelines. Ask if their policies are in writing and if their facility meets local and state legal requirements.

Is staff screened?

Have the owner/operator/director/employees/volunteers been fingerprinted as required by law? Has the camp conducted a check of local law enforcement records, national and statewide criminal history check through the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Florida Department of Law Enforcement for all of the staff and volunteers? What additional screening methods does the program use?

What are the staff/child ratios and group sizes of the program?

Florida's maximum staff-to-child ratio for school-age children is 1-to-25. National quality standards recommend between 1-to-8 and 1-to-15 for children age 5-teens, and group sizes no larger than 30.

Is staff well-trained?

Ask about staff experience and education in early childhood/school-age care, recreation, serving children with special needs, CPR/First Aid/Lifeguarding and if appropriately licensed when transporting children.

Is the program licensed or accredited?

Summer programs are not required to be licensed or accredited. Licensure and accreditation ensure that basic health and safety standards are met. Accreditation often requires additional quality standards.

Are parents welcome to visit at all times? Are family activities offered?

Programs should be accessible and welcoming to parents and families at all times.

Is there a daily lesson plan?

Ask to review a typical lesson plan. Quality programs provide more than continuous free play. Plans should be consistent with the philosophy of the program and should include indoor, outdoor, quiet, active, staff-planned, child-initiated and free-choice activities.

Is the facility adequate for the number of children enrolled?

Is there enough room for all program activities? Outdoor programs should include indoor or sheltered areas for resting, respite from the sun and for bad weather days.

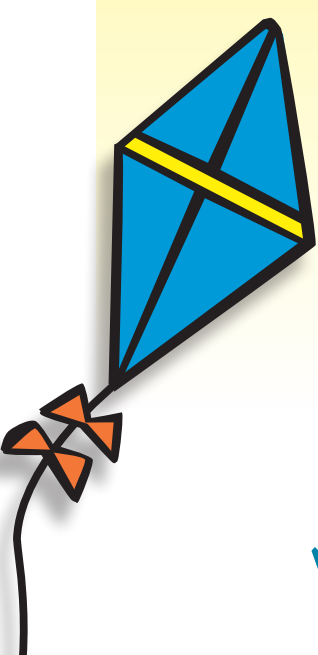
What are the hours of operation, fees and payment procedures?

Do drop-off and pick-up hours and procedures ensure that your child is receiving proper adult supervision? Are there fees for enrollment, special activities, late pick-ups or late payments?

For information on summer care options in your area, contact Florida's Child Care Resource and Referral Network at 1-866-357-3239.



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Quality Child Care Connections

Florida's Child Care Resource and Referral Network (CCR&R)

The Office of Early Learning serves as the headquarters for early learning coalitions and CCR&R offices across the state. Local CCR&R staff provide information on how to choose a quality child care provider and can refer families to child care options available in your area, as well as offer information about community resources. Trained staff can also provide information on how to access financial assistance for early education and care and how to enroll a 4-year-old in a Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Education Program.

The Office of Early Learning also serves as a clearinghouse for information, data, research and training on all aspects of the child care industry.

You can obtain your local CCR&R contact information by contacting the Office of Early Learning:

1-866-357-3239 (toll-free) or 850-717-8550
www.floridaearlylearning.com

Florida Department of Children and Families Child Care Services Program Office

The Department of Children and Families is responsible for licensure of child care facilities, family day care homes, large family child care homes, and facilities for children who are mildly ill; and registration of family day care homes in 62 of the 67 counties in Florida. Child care licensing files are public records and parents are encouraged to contact their local licensing authority to determine if a program is licensed and to review child care licensure files to assist families in making informed decisions about child care programs. Local contacts may be found on the department's website or by calling the program office.

1-850-488-4900
www.myflorida.com/childcare

Child Care Aware

Child Care Aware is a non-profit initiative whose mission is to ensure that every parent has access to good information about finding quality child care and resources in their community, through national consumer marketing and by raising visibility for local child care resource and referral agencies.

1-800-424-2246
www.childcareaware.org

Florida Afterschool Network (FAN)

The Florida Afterschool Network provides advocacy for the development, enhancement and sustainability of innovative, high-quality afterschool programs throughout the state of Florida.

1-850-222-4025
www.myfan.org

Florida Abuse Hotline

The Florida Abuse Hotline is a 24-hour hotline that handles reports of abuse, neglect and exploitation of children and vulnerable adults (the elderly or adults with disabilities).

1-800-96-ABUSE (1-800-962-2873)
www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/abuse-hotline

National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education

The National Resource Center's primary mission is to promote health and safety in out-of-home child care settings throughout the nation. Licensing regulations from all 50 states are available on this website.

1-800-598-5437
www.nrckids.org



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