

Parent Guide

TO FIND HIGH QUALITY CHILD CARE IN ONONDAGA & CAYUGA COUNTIES



CHILD CARE SOLUTIONS

navigating the way to high quality child care

2023



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Dear Parents,

Welcome to the "Parent Guide to Choosing High Quality Child Care." Choosing child care is an important and often difficult decision. This guide provides unbiased information to help choose the child care setting that best meets the needs of your family. It describes the types of child care, quality, average costs, financial aid, and other resources to support your child's healthy development.

Our staff* also offer FREE, personal referrals to licensed and registered child care programs in Onondaga and Cayuga Counties. We are available in-person, by phone, or on-line. Please contact us with questions or to share your ideas to improve our services.

Thank you for choosing Child Care Solutions.

Lori A. Schakow

Lori Schakow
Executive Director



Call: 315 • 446 • 1220 ext. 303
Toll Free: 888 • 729 • 7290 ext. 303

Web: www.childcaresolutionscny.org
Email: parenthelp@childcaresolutionscny.org

6724 Thompson Rd • Syracuse, NY • M-F • 8:30-4:30
100 North Street, Auburn, NY 13021 • T-F • 8:30-4:00



Visit Child Care Solutions on Facebook, Pinterest, and Twitter!

*It is important to know that this team does not monitor or inspect programs or providers. The information they provide is for referral purposes only and is not a recommendation. Their services can not replace your responsibility as a parent to inspect, evaluate and monitor the quality of the care you choose.

Average Cost of Child Care

Average Weekly Full Time Family Child Care

	Infant (6 weeks - 17 months)	Toddler (18-35 months)	Pre-School (3-4 Years)	School Age (5-12 Years)
Cayuga	\$159.71	\$152.65	\$150.00	\$136.33
Onondaga	\$187.47	\$179.51	\$175.98	\$164.11

Average Weekly Full Time Group Family Child Care

	Infant (6 weeks - 17 months)	Toddler (18-35 months)	Pre-School (3-4 Years)	School Age (5-12 Years)
Cayuga	\$183.89	\$170.00	\$169.38	\$133.75
Onondaga	\$185.83	\$177.19	\$171.97	\$156.94

Average Weekly Full Time Child Care Centers

	Infant (6 weeks - 17 months)	Toddler (18-35 months)	Pre-School (3-4 Years)	School Age (5-12 Years)
Cayuga	\$215.00	\$222.00	\$205.00	\$188.33
Onondaga	\$275.13	\$254.85	\$237.19	\$191.88

Average Weekly Full Time School Age Child Care

	School Age (5-12 Years)
Cayuga	\$140.00
Onondaga	\$141.26

Let's face it, Child Care is expensive! Help is available

Help is available...Onondaga & Cayuga Counties both offer financial aid for eligible families to help cover the cost of child care. The United Way of CNY funds a Community Child Care Scholarships that can also help defray costs for families in Onodaga County. If you have questions about either program please call Child Care Solutions at 446-1220 ext. 303. or toll free at 888-729-7290 ext. 303.

Income Eligibility Guide for Child Care Financial Aid

Family Size	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Gross Annual Income Limits	\$54,930	\$69,090	\$83,250	\$97,410	\$111,570	\$125,730	\$139,890

Eligibility Guidelines for Onondaga & Cayuga Counties: Child care assistance programs cover most (and sometimes all) of the cost of child care. Families may qualify if they: •Are working and they meet income eligibility guidelines. • Are attending high school, a high school equivalency program (GED), a two or four year college degree program, or a training program •Have an active Temporary Assistance case; are homeless; are receiving services for victims of domestic violence; have an open protective or preventative services care; are participating in a substance abuse treatment program; are enrolled in vocational, ESL, remedial, or literacy training; or are experiencing a short-term medical emergency.

Eligibility Guidelines for United Way: Families who are working or enrolled in certain educational programs, do not qualify for child care assistance through the Department of Social Services, or families experiencing a special hardship.

For more information or to apply for assistance:

If you live in Cayuga County:
Call Cayuga County Day Care Services (315) 253-4700
www.cayugacounty.us/281/Day-Care-Services

If you live in Onondaga County:
Call Onondaga County Day Care Services (315) 435-5683
www.ongov.net/dss/dayCare.html

Types of Child Care

What types of child care are available? How many children can one person care for? Is all child care regulated? What does that mean? Don't be confused...Let us help you navigate your way to high quality child care!

Every parent has different preferences and opinions when it comes to child care. Perhaps you think your child would like to be in a child care center with other children their age. Maybe you want your child to be cared for in a more home-like setting. Some families prefer to have friends or relatives care for their children.

Because all children are unique and have different needs and personalities, there is not a one size fits all answer for child care. The descriptions below will help you understand the types of regulated and non-regulated child care programs in New York State.

Regulated programs are required to meet minimum health, safety, nutrition and training standards. However, just because a program is regulated does not guarantee it is a high quality program. Look for the quality indicators on page 5 to learn what high quality care looks like.

If you would like to check the history of these regulated programs, see page 9.

1. Family Day Care Homes

These are small in-home programs. Family Day Care providers may care for three to six children at a time, can add one to two school-children with the maximum allowable number of children depending on ages in care.

2. Child Care Centers

These programs care for more than six children at a time, not held in a personal home but in a building. These programs are typically larger than those held in personal homes, with multiple staff members caring for groups of children, based on the children's ages.

3. School Age Child Care

These programs care for more than six children from kindergarten through age twelve, during non-school hours as well as during school vacation periods and holidays.

Maximum Group Size & Child to (1) Adult Ratio

	6 wks- 18 mos	18 mons- 36 mos	3 yrs	4 yrs	5 yrs	6-9 yrs	10-12 yrs
Group Size	8	12	18	21	24	20	30
Ratio	4:1	5:1	7:1	8:1	9:1	10:1	15:1



4. Family, Friend & Neighbor Care (Legally Exempt)

Enrolled Legally Exempt Provider (Child Care Assistance Program): Families receiving assistance from the county to help pay child care may choose to have a family member or friend provide care at their own home or in the child's home. In order for the caregiver to receive the child care assistance payments from the county, they must be enrolled as a Legally Exempt provider. Legally Exempt providers do not have to apply for a license or registration from the state because the provider is either related to the children (** see note on next page) OR are only caring for two non-related children at a time. The parent/guardian receiving the assistance must request the Legally-Exempt Enrollment Packet from Onondaga County Day Care Services, Temporary Employment Program, or Cayuga County Day Care Services to be assigned a case worker. The family and child care provider will complete the packet together, and submit the completed packet to Child Care Solutions. Child Care Solutions works with Onondaga & Cayuga counties to process the paperwork and enroll

Legally Exempt providers.

**Relatives of the child include: the grandparents of the child; the great-grand-parents of the child; the great-great-grandparents of the child; the aunts and uncles of the child, including the spouses of the aunts and uncles; the great-aunts-and great-uncles of the child, including the spouses of the great-aunts and great-uncles; the siblings of the child; and the first cousins of the child, including the spouses of the first cousins. (From Section 415.1(h)(1)(iii) of the NYS Day Care Regulations)

5. Nursery Schools

These are programs that provide care for three hours or less a day in a variety of settings including public & private schools, churches, community centers & homes. They typically follow the school calendar year. Nursery schools are not regulated by OCFS but may choose to voluntarily register with the State Education Department (SED).

6. Pre-Kindergartens

These are usually located in public schools, but can also be found in private schools or Child Care Centers. Pre-Kindergartens are not regulated by OCFS; instead they are supervised by the State Education Department (SED).

7. Head Start & Early Head Start Programs

These federally funded programs are offered to eligible families at no cost. Early Head Start programs may care for children birth through three, while Head Start programs are for children ages three through five. Both of these programs link families and children to community resources and support. These programs are usually licensed as Child Care Centers.

8. Camp Programs

Day or overnight recreational programs that operate during the summer months and sometimes school breaks. Some programs are licensed by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services and some are regulated by the NYS Department of Health and must meet minimum health and safety requirements.

9. Informal Care/Nanny

Individuals in NYS can care for up to two non-relative children (in addition to their own) in their homes, without having to obtain a license or registration from the state. Families may also choose to employ a private caregiver or nanny to provide care in the child's home. If you choose to employ a private caregiver or nanny, you are required to meet minimum wage, tax, and labor law requirements. Nannies are not regulated by OCFS and Child Care Solutions does not provide referrals to unregulated programs or for Nanny services.



7 Indicators of High Quality Child Care

1. Small Group Size & Low Caregiver to Ratio

Small group size and low teacher/child ratio are indicators for determining the quality of a child care program. Regulated programs must limit the number of children each adult cares for based on the standards set by NYS Office of Children & Family Services. These standards help to ensure children are properly supervised, safer and get the attention they need and deserve.

2. Strong Family/Provider Relationships

Quality child care programs respect and understand the importance of their relationships with families. You should feel welcome at all times. There should be open communication with the caregiver on a regular (if not daily) basis.

3. Consistent Relationships

Change is hard for most people. It can be especially difficult for young children. Getting used to new providers takes time and can be very stressful. High quality programs have low staff turn-over.

4. Providers Have Early Childhood Training

In your absence child care providers act as your child's protector and teacher. It is crucial that they are trained and educated in early childhood development. Quality programs make staff training a priority.

5. Program is Licensed or Registered

Staff of licensed and registered programs have background checks and are required to meet continuing education requirements. These programs are inspected to insure that they meet New York State's high health and safety standards. When you visit a regulated child care program, ask to see the license or registration certificates.

6. Good Health & Safety Practices

Attention to basic health and safety factors is critical to high quality child care. NYS regulations require that all licensed and registered providers meet basic health and safety standards.

7. Accreditation

Accreditation is a system of recognition for child care programs/providers that meet very high quality standards. Accreditation is granted by national commissions such as NAEYC or NAFCC.



1. Call Child Care Solutions

- Call Child Care Solution's Parent Services Specialists for a list of programs that meet your needs.
- Be specific when you call. For example, if your child has a pet allergy make sure we know.
- Discuss any questions or concerns you have with our team.

2. Call The Potential Program

- Ask if they have openings (state child's or children's age/ages).
- Ask questions on topics that are important to you. (Use information from this referral packet as a guide).
- Arrange for an interview appointment with providers who may meet your needs.
- Arrange a time to visit during the day while children are in care.

3. Prepare Interview Questions To Ask

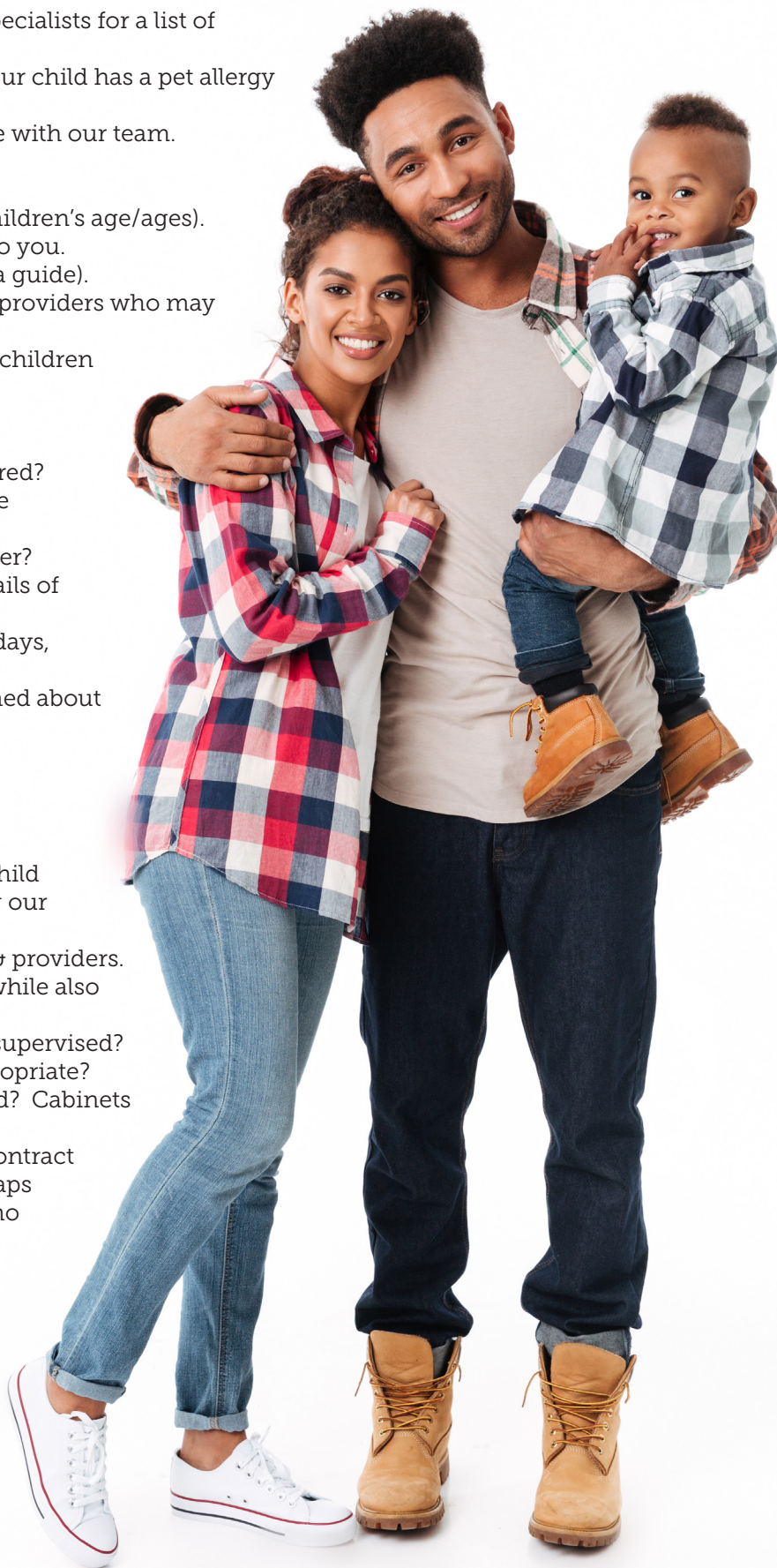
- Is the caregiver/program licensed or registered?
- How much experience and training does the caregiver/staff have?
- Is there frequent staff change and/or turnover?
- Is there a parent contract? What are the details of the contract?
- What is the expectation of payment for holidays, vacation and sick days (yours & theirs)?
- How does the program keep families informed about their child's/children's day?
- Are there parent involvement opportunities (Such as field trips or special projects)

4. Visit, Observe, And Interview

- Visit the program and interview either the child care center director or family caregiver. Bring our checklist, on page 7, of things to look for.
- Observe the interactions between children & providers.
- Observe the caregiver's/classroom routine while also observing the room.
- Take note of the area. Are the children well supervised? Are there enough toys? Are the toys age appropriate?
- Look for room safety. Are the outlets covered? Cabinets childproof?
- Obtain a copy of the provider's/program's contract and ask for references before you leave (perhaps current families and at least one family who no longer uses this program).

5. After The Visit

- Check references
- Read through the contract
- Contact the Office of Children & Family Services/Child Care Solutions & check the program's compliance history
- After you have narrowed down or chosen a program; you may want to bring your child in for a test run. Observe their interactions with the caregiver and other children.



Choosing Quality Child Care Checklist

Bring this checklist with you when you visit potential child care providers. When you are prepared with the right questions it is easier to interview and select the right provider for your family.

<p>At Child Care Solutions, we believe that you are the best person to choose a child care setting that will best meet the needs of your child. Choosing care can be a difficult one. It is important to carefully evaluate the program or family child care provider. We strongly suggest that you visit as many programs as possible. This will allow you to explore and compare the many options available. The following is a guide you may use while visiting and evaluating the child care setting.</p> <p>Child Care Solutions referral service does not give recommendations, endorse or inspect any programs or providers listed for referral purpose.</p>	Providers Name				
	1	2	3	4	5

Health And Safety

Does the site have working smoke detectors & fire extinguishers?					
Is there an emergency/evacuation plan and are practice drills done with the children?					
Is the site child proof: electrical outlets covered, stairways protected, poisons kept away from children, guns locked in cabinets?					
Is there a working phone on site and emergency numbers posted?					
Is the furniture and equipment safe and in good condition?					
Are there first aid supplies available on site?					
Is there a bathroom or wash area accessible to children on site?					
Is the environment clean? (eating, diapering and bathroom areas)					
Are good health habits such as washing hands before eating, after toileting or playing outside practiced?					
Are infants laid on their backs to sleep?					
Is at least one care giver on site certified in medication administration, CPR and First Aid?					

ENVIRONMENT

Does the site have a safe place for infants to crawl and explore?					
Is there space indoors for active play and outdoors for running, jumping and climbing?					
Does the site have separate spaces for quiet times like doing homework or naptime?					

Is the site clean, bright and child friendly?					
Are there equipment and supplies on site to accommodate the needs of various ages: blocks, books, games, toys, creative art materials?					
Are children allowed to choose activities based on their own interests and abilities?					
Is reading to the children part of the daily activities? Do children watch TV? How much and what?					

CAREGIVER

Are there enough adults for the group size and ages of children?					
Does the caregiver attend trainings related to health and safety & child development?					
Does the caregiver provide individual attention to each child?					
Does the caregiver get down to the level of the children and engage in activities?					
Does the caregiver appear to be warm, loving and nurturing?					

POLICIES, PROCEDURES & HANDBOOK

Are there written descriptions of various fees, hours of operation, and holiday & vacation schedule?					
How are behavior issues and discipline handled?					
How are feeding & sleeping schedules handled? Is toilet training discussed?					
Are nutritious meals provided? Does the provider participate in the CACFP food program?					
Are children transported for any reason? Who provides the car seats? Is there a written permission form?					
Are parents allowed to visit at any time?					
Are references provided?					
How does the program/provider share information regarding your child with you on a regular basis?					
What happens when your child is ill?					
What happens when the care giver is ill?					
How is toilet training handled?					

Notes

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- Child Care Solutions' Parent Referral Specialists can help you find and choose child care that best meets your needs and the needs of your child. There is no fee for this referral service.
- All information gathered by Child Care Solutions is confidential and is only used to help locate potential providers that fit a families' needs, identify other resources that may be helpful, and in blind data reports for our funding sources.
- Any provider names that are given to families are referrals only. They are not recommendations. The average weekly cost of full time care varies depending on the type of setting and the age of your child.
- Child Care Solutions believes that good child care is a community resource that supports families, contributes to economic productivity, and nurtures children's growth. If you have a comment or complaint against a Child Care Solutions staff member, please contact our Director of Operations, Shannon Gillen at (315)446-1220 ext.307 or the Executive Director, Lori Schakow at (315)446-1220 ext. 310. Call toll free at (888)729-7290.
- We are committed to activities, positions and goals that positively impact children's lives. We are responsive, professional and caring in our interactions with families, providers and each other.

If You Would Like To Check Compliance History Or Have A Comment Or Complaint About A Child Care Program, Please Contact:

*Child Care Solutions: (315) 446-1220, Monday-Friday 8:30 am - 4:30 pm
(For Family Day Care Provider, Day Care Centers and School-Age Programs in Onondaga County)*
or

*NYS Office of Children and Family Services: 1-800-732-5207 or 315-423-1202, Monday-Friday 9:00 am-5:00 pm
or www.ocfs.state.ny.us (For Family Day Care Provider, Day Care Centers & School-Age Programs in Cayuga County)*

If you need information on other resources in Onondaga you can call 211 and speak with an information and referral specialist 24/7 or visit www.211cny.com. For Cayuga call 877-356-9211 or visit www.211.lifeline.org. If you have trouble connecting you can dial an alternate toll-free number: 1-844-445-1922.

- Housing Resources
- Financial Resources
- Utility Resources
- Household Items
- Family Resources
- Disaster Resources
- Food Resources
- Legal Resources
- Mental Health Resources
- Employment & Education Resources
- Addictions Resources
- Volunteer Resources
- Health Resources
- Government Resources
- Transportation Resources
- Military Resources
- Finances



Please visit:

www.ongov.net/links for links to other resources in Onondaga County or
www.cayugacounty.us for a list of services in Cayuga County

For more information on other resources for families you can visit our website at
www.childcaresolutionscny.org or:

New York's Early Care & Learning Council
www.earlycareandlearning.org

Child Care Aware of America
www.childcareaware.org



Our Locations & Business Hours

Auburn 100 North Street, Auburn, NY 13021

Tuesday - Friday 8:30 am - 4:00 pm

Syracuse 6724 Thompson Road, Syracuse, NY 13211

Monday - Friday 8:30 am - 4:30 pm

Our Mission

Building excellence in the early care and learning system while advancing equal access for all children in our community.

Our Vision

Every child is cared for in a high quality, safe & nurturing environment that cultivates healthy development, early learning and joy.

Contact Information

Main Phone..... Fax (315) 446-2010

Parent Referrals..... (315) 446-1220 ext 303

Toll Free(888) 729-7290 ext 303

Website..... www.childcaresolutionscny.org

It's All About The Children

Child Care Solutions' values guide the way in which we do our work and carry out our mission.

- We are committed to racially equitable, high quality services that respond directly to community needs including equity in access to child care, equity in quality and affordability of child care, and equity in compensation for child care providers.
- We are committed to providing services that are accessible, and linguistically and culturally appropriate to the communities we serve.
- We are committed to activities, position and goals that positively impact children's lives.
- We are responsive, professional and caring in our interactions with parents, providers and each other.
- We appreciate the diversity of our community's families and providers and respect their knowledge, experiences and choices.
- We are innovative, resourceful, and willing to tackle difficult issues.

If you hold these same core beliefs please consider supporting Child Care Solutions.

To learn how to support our organization please call: (315) 446-1220 ext. 310

Published by Child Care Solutions



"Parenting has nothing to do with perfection. Perfection isn't even the goal, not for us, not for our children. Learning together to live well in an imperfect world, loving each other despite or even because of our imperfections, and growing as humans while we grow our little humans, those are the goals of gentle parenting. So don't ask yourself at the end of the day if you did everything right. Ask yourself what you learned and how well you loved, then grow from your answer. That is perfect parenting."

- L.R. Knost, *The Gentle Parent: Positive, Practical, Effective Discipline*