



# Choosing Quality Child Care:

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A Guide for Parents

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## STEP 1: BE INFORMED

### Choosing Quality Child Care

Selecting a child care option that meets all your personal needs and preferences can be overwhelming. You want a setting where your child can learn and thrive, and do so while being safe and happy.

This guide was designed to provide practical and legislative information to help parents make informed choices regarding quality child care programs.



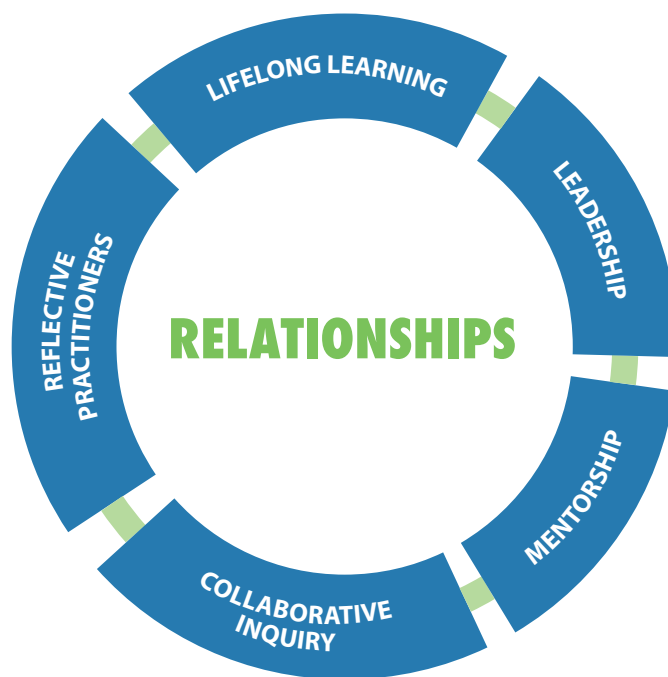
**Raising the Bar**  
*Early Childhood Education*  
An ASCY Community Initiative  
*A Quality Initiative in Peel*

### Raising the Bar in Peel

Raising the Bar in Peel is a quality initiative that promotes reflection and critical thinking in educators working in early learning and child care programs. It provides a platform to increase a program’s capacity to enrich their practices.

Through Raising the Bar, educators focus on the following foundations:

- Reflective Practice
- Leadership
- Mentorship
- Collaborative Inquiry
- Lifelong Learning



These foundations help ensure that practices in an early learning and child care program are current and responsive.

Ask a centre to see a copy of their current Raising the Bar participation certificate when visiting a program.

## What is a child care license?

Licensed child care is regulated by the Ministry of Education under the Child Care and Early Years Act. The Act establishes minimum standards, (including physical space, equipment, and furnishings, playground, staff qualifications, staff-to-child ratios, health and safety, nutrition and basic programming) which licensees of child care centres, nursery schools, school age programs, and Private Home Child Care Agencies must meet. These standards are in place to ensure the health, safety and well-being of children in licensed child care settings.

For more information on licensed child care, please visit [www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare)

## Program Philosophies/Curriculum:

Philosophies are the values and beliefs that govern a program. The philosophy is the **why** of the program and the curriculum is the **what** and the **how** of the program.

Some aspects of a child care environment include:

- Contributing to the development of the whole child (cognitive, social, physical, fine motor)
- Building on a child's current knowledge and interests
- Acknowledging the parents as partners and giving them a sense of belonging
- Demonstrating cultural sensitivity
- Having realistic and developmentally appropriate goals for children
- Encouraging curiosity, understanding and problem-solving
- Providing a safe and healthy environment for children
- Providing play-based learning opportunities
- Ensuring health and safety standards are maintained



## Types of Care:

**Licensed Child Care Program (centre-based):** Licensed by the Ministry of Education and must meet minimum standard requirements set out in the Child Care and Early Years Act.

**Licensed Home-Based Care:** Children are cared for in the private residence of the caregiver and supervised by an agency that is licensed by the Ministry of Education. Caregivers must comply with the Child Care and Early Years Act.

**Unlicensed/Independent Care:** Caregivers are expected to comply with the Child Care and Early Years Act. Caregivers are not licensed by the Ministry of Education.

For more information on licensed child care, please visit [www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/childcare)

	Licensed Programs/ Nursery Schools	Licensed Home-Based Care through Agencies	Unlicensed Home Care
Licensed by Ministry of Education	Yes	Yes, under the agency umbrella, not individually	No, and they must disclose that they are not licensed
Nature of Care	Age-Related Group	Small Group	Small Group
Setting	Centre	Home	Home
Fee Subsidy Available	Yes	Yes	No
Peel Inclusion Resource Services (PIRS)	May be available	May be available	Is not available
Staff Qualifications (Registered with the College of ECEs = RECE)	Minimum 1 staff per group must be RECE	Training provided	Unknown
Vulnerable Sector Checks	Required of all staff	Caregivers have current checks for all family members over 18	Unknown
Hours of Care	Typical child care hours are 7:00am - 6:00pm, Nursery Schools operate for 2.5 hours in mornings and/or afternoons.	Varies	Varies

For more information on licensed child care centres age groupings, ratios, group size, and staff qualifications please visit: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/child-care-rules-child-care-and-early-years-act>

## STEP 2: IDENTIFY YOUR NEEDS

There are several different types of curriculum or learning options available depending on the program. It is important to determine what your personal needs and preferences are before selecting a child care program. Some general questions you should consider to begin with are:

- Do you need a program location that is close to your home, work, or your child's school? Does the location need to be close to a bus route?
- What hours do you need care for? What days? Do you need flexible hours to accommodate overtime or shift work?
- Does the program have before or after school care, cover school closures, holidays, lunch programs, or evening hours?
- Is there a discount if you have multiple children in the same program?
- Does your child have any special requirements (e.g., dietary, developmental, other)?
- Are you looking for a particular program philosophy/curriculum (e.g., Montessori)?
- Will you be using fee subsidy? Does the program accept fee subsidy?

## STEP 3: CONSIDER YOUR OPTIONS

Contact Child Development Resource Connection Peel (CDRCP) at 905-890-9432 or visit [www.cdrcp.com](http://www.cdrcp.com) and use the online chat feature to speak with a certified Information and Referral Specialist who will help you locate child care options that best suit your family's needs.

A quick call to each child care provider to ask a few key questions (such as the ones listed on the next page) will allow you to make a more informed decision.

Make an appointment to visit and interview your final list of possible caregivers and schedule a time when the other children will be there. This is a chance for you and your child to get a feel for the program and the people. Take a tour of all the rooms that your child will have access to so you can observe not only the setting, but also the interaction between the children and the adults. Take time to observe different activities.

The overall program should support your child's physical, emotional, social and intellectual well-being. Quality Initiatives such as being a participating program of Raising the Bar in Peel, and having a child care license with no restrictions are quality indicators. Understanding these will help you to assess the quality of the setting you are visiting. To further assist you, a number of interview questions are listed on the following pages that encompass different aspects of quality care as previously discussed throughout this guide.

# Questions to Ask A Caregiver

## Hours of Care:

- What are the hours? What policy has been put in place for pick-ups (primary caregiver or temporary caregiver), late pick-ups? Is there a fee?
- What happens if my child is sick? Are they required to stay home? Am I still required to pay?
- What happens if my child gets sick or hurt while they are in your care? Are you obligated to show proof of first aid before being able to offer care to the children at this agency?
- What are the policies for payment if my child is on vacation?

## Costs and Subsidies:

- What costs would be associated with my child being in care? Are there spaces for families and children who require a subsidized space?
- Will I be provided with a receipt for income tax purposes?
- What is included as part of the fee (E.g., food, diapers, sunscreen)? What additional costs are there? If food is provided what are examples of meals being served?
- What is the billing period and what is the method of payment? Is it weekly/monthly, cash/cheque/pre-authorized?

## Program Philosophy and Activities:

- Are there other parents that I am able to call for a reference about the program itself?
- Are parents able to set aside a time to meet with caregivers with any questions or concerns that they may be having?
- What are the kinds of activities that occur on a typical day? What are the Indoor and outdoor toy options?
- What is the protocol for outdoor play in the warm/cold months? Any alternatives during inclement weather?
- Are there any pets?
- Is the environment arranged in a way that encourages the children to engage in activities? Do children have the option to not participate in an activity?
- Are parents encouraged to participate in the program or visit during the day? If so, is notice required before coming by?
- What are the policies that you have set in place for the administration of medication? If my child has a prescription medication are you able to give it to them? What about over the counter medications? Where do you store the medication and how to you keep track of it?

## Staff/Caregivers:

- Are there written policies and procedures? If so, would you be able to provide me with a parent hand book?
- What kind of training do the staff members have?
- What community partners or supports do you have to ensure the well-being of children and families in your care? (E.g., Does your program participate in a quality initiative like Raising the Bar in Peel?)
- Are there students or other adults working or volunteering in the program? How often and what are their responsibilities?

## How Does Learning Happen?



“How Does Learning Happen,” is a professional learning resource that explains how children learn and establishes four foundations or ‘ways of being’ that all children should experience every day. These four foundations apply regardless of age, ability, culture language, geography, or setting.



The four foundations include:

- **Expression**
- **Well-Being**
- **Engagement**
- **Belonging**

This document is aligned with the Provincial Kindergarten Curriculum, guides educators in their programs, and helps caregivers when they are selecting a quality child care program.

## What is the Cost of Child Care?

The cost of an early childhood program varies from setting to setting and is dependent on the age of the child, the hours of care, and the type of program offered. You can claim child care expenses on your income tax. Keep all receipts for your records.

## What is Child Care Fee Subsidy?

Child Care Fee Subsidy is available for parents, foster parents, or legal guardians of a child between the ages of 0-12 years. This is offered by the Region of Peel. Financial eligibility for a child care subsidy is determined by a review of a family's income. In addition to financial eligibility there is additional criteria a family must meet.

To determine whether you are eligible for the Child Care Fee Subsidy or to obtain more information you can visit: [www.peelregion.ca/children/programs/subsidy/](http://www.peelregion.ca/children/programs/subsidy/)

You may also contact CDRCP for information on providers that accept subsidy. To speak to a certified information and referral specialist call CDRCP at 905-890-9432.



## STEP 4: MAKING YOUR FINAL DECISION

Make your final choice by reviewing the information you have collected and the reactions of both you and your child to the settings you have visited.

- Which one seems to meet your child's needs as well as being affordable and conveniently located?
- Would you feel comfortable leaving your child there?
- Do the other children seem happy and engaged?
- Would you feel comfortable expressing your feelings and concerns to the provider?
- Can you comply with all of the policies and procedures?
- Contact the program/agency to confirm the start date.
- Some caregivers may have a program manual and/or written agreements concerning costs, schedules for fee payments, vacation, sickness policies and others. Ask for copies before you sign the agreement.
- Have a written agreement outlining the terms of care agreed upon with the program administration (Owner, Licensee, Supervisor, etc)



Arrange the start time and ask for the caregiver's input on how to best help your child to adjust to their program.

### Additional Resources

The following resources for families are available at [www.cdrcp.com](http://www.cdrcp.com)

1. Prepare Your Child for Care
2. Build a Positive Relationship With Your Caregiver
3. Tips For Parents on Choosing Quality Summer Programs
4. Tips for Parents with an Infant Who are Planning to Return to Work
5. Tips For Parents on Choosing Quality School-Age Child Care Programs

### References

1. Ontario Ministry of Education
2. How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years
3. Child Development Resource Connection Peel
4. Child Care and Early Years Act

**Notes:**

Name of Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Visited: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name of Program: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Visited: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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