

Choosing Care for Your Children: Child Care Homes

Selection of child care is an important task for Kansas parents. The Choosing Care for Your Children series is designed to help you be a better informed consumer.

What is a child care home?

A child care home is a child care facility and is required by state law to be licensed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. The number of children that may be cared for at any one time is based on the type of home, ages of children in care, and the number of caregivers.

Types of homes

Licensed family child care home: One caregiver provides care for 10 or fewer children, including the provider's own, younger than 16 years of age. Children 11 to 16 years of age unrelated to the provider are included in the license capacity if child care for this age group exceeds 3 hours a week. No more than seven children younger than 5 years old may be cared for in the home. No more than three children may be 18 months or younger.

Maximum License Capacity Examples

No. under 18 mos.	No. 18 mos. to 5 years	5 years to 11 years	License capacity
—	7	3	10
1	5	4	10
2	4	3	9
3	3	2	8

Licensed group child care home: Two caregivers may provide care for a maximum of 12 children from infancy to 16 years of age, or one caregiver may provide care for the following ages and numbers of children:

- If no children are younger than 2½ years, one adult may care for nine children.
- If no children are younger than 3 years, one adult may care for 10 children.
- If all children are school age, one adult may care for 12 children.

How do I know if a home is licensed?

Kansas licensing law requires that any person providing care for one or more non-related children for more than 20 hours a week must be licensed. Ask to see the license when you visit the home.

A *license* means that the home was inspected by the local health department before the license to operate a child care home was issued. This inspection covers health, safety, and programs. Parents are responsible for evaluating care.

While a license does not guarantee quality care, it may be a good indicator of the provider's concern for the health and safety of children.

Finding and choosing the right home

Most families find a child care home by word of mouth: friends, co-workers, neighbors. Many child care homes advertise on community bulletin boards and in newspapers.

The following suggestions may be helpful:

- Obtain names of licensed providers from local health, KDHE, or extension offices;
- Obtain names from community or employer child care resource and referral services;
- Advertise, describing the type of services needed.
- Most importantly, visit several homes.

This is the surest way to choose good child care. Don't be embarrassed about asking to see "someone else's house." Look at all the rooms and spaces the children use — kitchen, bathroom, bedrooms, and inside and outside play areas. Use all senses, including nose, eyes, ears, and touch when evaluating the areas. Visit at least once when children are in care.

Things to look for when you visit:

- Do the children seem happy?
- Does the caregiver seem to enjoy this type of work? Does the caregiver smile and appear gentle while talking and working with the children?
- Does the caregiver's family seem supportive?
- Has the provider received specialized training?
- Are the menus, emergency procedures, and planned activities posted?
- Do the children receive the kind of individual attention you would like for your child?
- Are the children supervised at all times, both indoors and outdoors?
- What ideas does the provider have about teaching/learning in children, family engagement, and holidays?

Guidelines for choosing child care

What kinds of activities are provided?

- Look around. Do you see paper, crayons, paste, paint, books, play dough?
- Are there blocks, cars, nested cups, pop-beads, puzzles, dolls, dress-ups, pots and pans?
- How much of the day is the TV on? Research indicates children's TV exposure should be limited. Is there a lesson plan posted for everyone to see?
- Do the children practice self-help skills?
- Are the children given opportunities to be creative and actively involved in play?
- Do the children sing songs, read books, and engage in other language-based activities?

Are the activities and play spaces appropriate for the ages of children in care?

- Look around for a rocking chair. Infants and toddlers often need a little rocking chair time.
- Are infants and toddlers free to crawl and explore?
- School-age children need space for active play after school, separate from younger children.
- Is there 25 square feet of indoor space for each child?
- Are planned activities and toys appropriate for the ages and number of children in care?

Do the children play outside every day, weather permitting? Is the yard a safe place?

- Look for sand; something to climb on, crawl through, or step over; wheel and push-pull toys; boxes, and balls.
- Is the area fenced; free from trash, glass, and other dangerous objects?
- Is equipment in good repair?
- Does the provider stay outside with the children?

Is the inside space safe for children?

Is the home clean, well-vented, and heated?

Are the indoor toys and equipment in good condition?

Are electrical outlets and heaters covered or screened?

Are safety gates in place if necessary?

Are working smoke detectors in every room of the home?

Are medicines, cleaning supplies, dangerous chemicals, and sharp instruments stored so children cannot get to them? Are guns in locked storage?

What nutritious meals and snacks are provided for the children's health and well-being?

Are food preparation safety procedures being followed?

Are the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines being followed for preparing and serving meals and snacks?

What plans are in place for emergencies?

- Is there a telephone in the home? Are emergency numbers posted nearby in case of illness or accident?
- Are phone numbers of parents posted?

What plans have been made and practiced with the children in case of fire or tornado?

How is the health of the children protected?

A licensed provider must have immunization information and a physical on file for each child at the time of enrollment.

Do they encourage cleanliness such as: hand washing, teeth brushing, and other health practices?

- Providers must give assurance of their own health to be licensed.

Parent permission must be obtained for emergency medical treatment and before giving any medicine.

Are first aid kits easily accessible by adults?

Will the provider work with your child if he/she has special needs or if there is a chronic concern such as allergies?

Are medicines properly labeled and out of the reach of children?

Is the child care provider first aid and CPR certified?

What about discipline?

- Talk with the provider about how children are helped to obey rules and learn self-discipline. No corporal punishment or other method of discipline may be used that is humiliating, frightening, or physically or mentally harmful to the child, even with parent permission.

Business arrangements

Once you have made a choice, work out arrangements with the provider about costs, hours, and substitute child care when the provider is ill. Check the following business details:

- Payment plan.
- Necessary permissions you must sign.
- Phone numbers where you or other family members or a friend may be reached.
- Names of people authorized to pick up your child.
- A written, signed contract or agreement is suggested for clearly defining parent/provider relations.

Share information about your child. This may include allergies, food likes and dislikes, favorite activities, fears, sleep, and toileting habits.

Prepare your child for this experience

Parents and children can benefit from preparation. Talk with your child about the home and the caregiver before you take the child for a visit. The first visit should be when other children are not there. Be sure to mention familiar and enjoyable activities. Give your child time to "check it all out."

Provide a few familiar things for your child to take to this new place. Stay until your child feels comfortable. You may have to take a day off from work, but it will be worth it in the long run. Special attention during these first few weeks is extremely important.

After your child is enrolled:

- Listen to your child and talk about the day.
- Pick your child up ON TIME.
- Pay fees promptly, according to the plan made with the caregiver. Inform the caregiver when your child is ill or will be absent for any other reason.

- Abide by the written policies and agreements.
- Take time to talk with the caregiver in the morning or evening about your child's progress and the day's activities.

If problems arise . . .

If a problem should arise, discuss it with the caregiver and try to work things out. You should be encouraged to visit the home while your child is there. This is your right. Do it.

If you have concerns about the quality of care your child is receiving, or about someone who is caring for children and is not licensed, call the local health department.

If you feel your child has been neglected, or physically or mentally abused while in care or by any one else, immediately contact the local Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF) office. Take your child to a physician or hospital for an examination. If the DCF office is closed, contact your local law enforcement agency.

And remember . . .

The caregiver you choose is one of the most important persons in your child's life.

- Get acquainted.
- Be supportive.
- Show your appreciation.
- Give your cooperation.

Contact information

Kansas Department of Health and Environment

Child Care Licensing and Registration

Curtis State Office Building

1000 S.W. Jackson, Suite 200

Topeka, KS 66612-1274

Phone: (785) 296-1270

Fax: (785) 296-0803

E-mail: cclr@kdhe.state.ks.us

http://www.kdhe.state.ks.us/bcclr/child_care.html

Kansas Department for Children and Families

Office of the Secretary

915 SW Harrison Street

Topeka, Kansas 66612

Phone: 785-296-3274

<http://www.dcf.ks.gov/>

Kansas Abuse and Neglect Hotline

Phone: 1-800-922-5330

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Adapted from *Choosing Care for Your Children: Child Care Homes*, MF840, K-State Research and Extension, July 2005



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Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service

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