

# Utah Office of Child Care

## What is Quality Care for Young Children?

### Areas of Quality

All young children need quality care no matter where they are – at home with a parent, being cared for by a relative, or in a child care setting. Quality care is care that promotes the optimal growth and development of children. This pamphlet focuses on quality care for children in any child care setting. It addresses the following six areas:

Health  
Safety  
A Good Physical Environment  
Caring Adult/Child Interactions  
Activities to Promote Healthy Growth and Development  
Well Trained Caregivers

Indicators of quality care in each of these areas have been compiled using quality and accreditation standards published by The American Public Health Association & The American Academy of Pediatrics, The National Association for the Education of Young Children, The National Child Care Association, and the National Association for Family Child Care. In many instances these indicators define a higher level of quality than that required by Child Care Licensing.

### Health

#### Quality Indicators for Health

- Child care settings meet all of the health regulations of the Bureau of Licensing, as well as local health departments.
- Children's nutritional needs are met.
- Children always have access to clean drinking water both indoors and outdoors.
- Children are given opportunities for rest and sleep, but are not forced to. Quiet play is provided for children who are unable to sleep.
- All children in care are up-to-date on required immunizations.
- Toys and materials are cleaned and disinfected regularly, and as needed between scheduled cleanings.
- The facility is cleaned and trash emptied regularly. Bathroom fixtures are cleaned and disinfected daily.
- Measures are taken to prevent the spread of communicable diseases.
- Children and staff wash their hands upon arrival, before and after preparing or serving food and eating, after toileting or diaper changes, after handling animals, after coming in from outdoors, and whenever hands come in contact with bodily fluids.
- Adults model healthy behaviors for children, including eating nutritious foods and not smoking or drinking alcoholic beverages in front of children.
- Activities for children include age-appropriate health education activities, including activities that promote physical, dental mental, and social health.

## **Safety**

### Quality Indicators for Safety

- Child care settings meet all of the safety regulations of the Bureau of Licensing, as well as local health and fire departments.
- Children are directly supervised and accounted for at all times.
- Parents are allowed to visit the child care setting at any time their child is in care.
- There are working smoke detectors and fire extinguishers in the building.
- A stocked first aid kit is available.
- Emergency numbers for fire, police, ambulance and poison control are posted near the phone.
- There is an adult present who is trained in first aid and CPR and emergency procedures.
- The environment is free of safety hazards for small children, including: firearms; flammable materials and matches or cigarette lighter; toxic substances and plants; sharp points or corners (sharp wood, metal, or concrete edges should be rounded); splinter; protruding nails or bolts; rusty metal; lead paint; toys, objects, or objects with removable parts with a diameter of less than 1 1/4 inch; uncovered electrical outlets; plastic bags; styrofoam; dangling cords or ropes; or balloons.
- Outdoor play areas are protected from the street and other dangers (such as ditches, wells, ponds, or swimming pools) by a fence or a natural barrier such as a hedge.
- Climbing equipment, swings and large pieces of furniture are securely anchored to the ground. Cushioning material such as mats, wood chips, or sand are used under climbing equipment, slides, and swings.
- Adults are familiar with warning signs of child abuse and neglect. Adults understand and comply with laws regarding the reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect.

## **A Good Physical Environment**

### Quality Indicators for a Good Physical Environment

- Child care settings meet all of the facility regulations of the Bureau of Licensing, as well as local health and fire departments.
- The indoor environment is clean, in good repair, well-lit, well-ventilated, and maintains appropriate temperatures for children, The outdoor environment is clean and in good repair, and is free of animal feces, broken glass, and trash.
- There is adequate indoor and outdoor play space so that children are not crowded.
- The outdoor play area includes sunlit areas, shaded areas, grass, hard surfaces for wheeled toys, an area for sand play, and equipment for climbing, riding , and balancing.
- The environment is warm, colorful, inviting, and interesting to children. Pictures and children's artwork are displayed at children's eye-level.
- There are separate areas for active play and quiet play, and for playing alone or with others. Quiet areas includes soft elements such as rugs, pillows, and soft furniture.
- Space is designed to provide clear pathways for children so that traffic patterns do not interfere with children's activities.
- Each child has a space for his or her personal belongings.

- Children's furniture and equipment is child-size.
- There are a variety age-appropriate toys and materials available to children, in sufficient quantity. Toys and materials are kept in good repair.
- Children's toys and materials are organized on low, open shelves where children can use them independently.
- Toys and materials are changed or rotated on a regular basis so children do not become bored.

### **Activities to Promote Healthy Growth & Development**

#### Quality Indicators for Activities to Promote Healthy Growth & Development

- Daily play activities are provided to promote the physical, social/emotional, and intellectual development of each child. Activities are appropriate to the developmental levels of each child. There is a written plan outlining the daily activities.
- Children have opportunities to engage in the following activities: block building, dramatic play, art, music and dance, books and reading, science, pre-math, sand and water play, and play with manipulatives. There are sufficient toys and materials for these activities.
- Adults read and sing with children daily. Songs and books allow children to play and experiment with rhythm, rhyme, and repetition. Children also have opportunities to write (with scribbles, letter-like marks, and invented spelling) in play activities.
- Children have daily opportunities for outdoor play, weather permitting.
- Children's activities are hands-on, allowing them to actively explore and experiment with materials and their environment. Adults observe what interests children and plan activities based on the children's interests.
- Children's activities are multi-cultural, non-sexist, and non-stereotyping.
- Children are allowed to make choices about which activities they engage in.
- Children are given opportunities to develop growing competence and independence in age-appropriate self-help skills such as feeding, dressing, and toileting, and through selecting and putting away their own play materials.
- Daily activities include an age-appropriate balance of indoor/outdoor activities, quiet/active activities, large muscle/small muscle activities, individual/group activities, open-ended/closed-ended activities, and child-initiated/adult-initiated activities. The amount of time spent in whole group, adult-initiated activities is minimized for children under age 6. Children are given plenty of uninterrupted time to engage in freely chosen extended play activities
- Open-ended activities for children focus on the process of expressing ideas and feelings, rather than on the creation of a specific finished product.
- Caregivers work cooperatively with parents of children with special needs to ensure children's needs are met.
- Transition times between activities are un-hurried and un-regimented. Children are told ahead of time when a transition is coming, and are allowed time to finish up their activities. Children are not expected to just sit and wait with nothing to do during transition times.

-Adults are flexible in adjusting routines and activities to the changing needs and interests of children as they arise.

### **Caring Adult/Child Interactions**

#### Quality Indicators For Caring Adult/Child Interactions

-Each child has opportunities to develop long-term trusting relationships with and attachments to a small number of caregivers.

-Adults like children and enjoy working with them.

-Adults are friendly, positive, and courteous with children. Adults interact frequently with children, and express respect and affection for children by smiling, touching, holding, and speaking with children at their eye level throughout the day. Adults listen attentively to children, and encourage them to share their experiences, ideas, and feelings, giving children as much one-on-one attention as possible.

-Adults respond to children's needs for food, rest, and toileting/diaper changes, and provide comfort, relief from distress, and stimulation.

-Adults help children to cope with separation from their parents and reassure children that their parents will return.

-Adults use daily routines such as meal times/feeding and toileting/diapering to talk with children and give them one-on-one attention.

-Adults allow and encourage children to express their feelings, including happiness, delight, sadness, anger, and hurt. Adults help children deal with feelings by identifying and naming them, and helping children learn appropriate ways to express their feelings. Children are encouraged to feel good about their accomplishments.

-Adults treat children of all races, religions, family backgrounds, and cultures with equal respect and consideration. Adults provide children of both sexes with equal opportunities to participate in all activities.

-Adults encourage children's learning by asking questions, posing problems, and making comments or suggestions that stimulate children's thinking. Adults sometimes join in children's play to help expand upon the children's ideas.

-Adults recognize and encourage pro-social behaviors such as cooperating, helping, taking turns, solving problems by talking, and respecting other's feelings and belongings.

-Adults help children to develop self-control. Adults establish clear and consistent limits and fair rules, and patiently remind children of the rules as needed. Adults use positive guidance techniques such as redirection and problem-solving with children when problems occur.

-Adults intervene quickly when children become aggressive to prevent them from hurting each other, and help children learn more appropriate ways to express anger or frustration.

-Adults do not use any type of corporal punishment, including hitting, spanking, shaking, pinching, or any other measures which produce physical pain. Adults do not use any humiliating or frightening discipline technique, including threats, verbal abuse, or emotional abuse. Adults do not withhold or threaten to withhold food, rest, or bathroom use.

## **Well-trained Caregivers**

### Quality Indicators For Well Trained Caregivers

- Adults have a good understanding of child development, and use this knowledge to plan activities and an environment that promotes children's growth and development.
- Family Child Care Providers are high school graduates and have either a CDA credential, an associate or undergraduate degree in early childhood education or child development, or coursework in child growth and development.
- Child Care Center Directors have: 1) a bachelor's degree in early childhood education or child development; 2) coursework in business administration or related business experience; and 3) prior teaching experience in early childhood.
- Child Care Center Lead Teachers have either an associate's degree in early childhood education or child development, or a CDA or CCP credential. Child Care Center Teacher Assistants are high school graduates who have training in early childhood education/child development.
- All Family and Center Child Care Providers participate in ongoing professional development including training in child development, child health and safety, and program planning for children.
- There are enough well-trained caregivers to meet children's needs. See table below for minimal adult-to-child ratios (those required by Licensing) and optimal adult-to-child ratios (best practice for meeting children's needs).

### **ADULT-TO-CHILD RATIOS FOR CHILD CARE CENTERS**

Minimal Adult-to-Child Ratios			Optimal Adult-to-Child Ratios		
Age of Children	Ratios	Group Size	Age of Children	Ratios	Group Size
Birth 2 years	1 to 4	8	Birth 2 years	1 to 3	6
2-year-olds	1 to 7	14	2-year-olds	1 to 4	8
3-year-olds	1 to 12	24	3-year-olds	1 to 5	10
4-year-olds	1 to 15	30	4-year-olds	1 to 7	14
5 to 12-year-olds	1 to 20	35	5 to 12-year-olds	1 to 8	16
			6 to 8	1 to 10	20
			9 to 12	1 to 12	24

## ADULT-TO-CHILD RATIOS FOR IN-HOME FAMILY CHILD CARE

Minimal Adult-to-Child Ratios	Optimal Adult-to-Child Ratios
One Adult: No more than 8 children, including no more than 2 children under the age of 2 (including the caregiver's own children under the age of 4).	One Adult: No more than 6 children, including no more than 2 children under the age of 2 (including the caregiver's own children under the age of 6).
Two Adults: No more than 16 children, including no more than 4 children under the age of 2 (including the caregiver's own children under the age of 4).	Two Adults: No more than 12 children, including no more than 3 children under the age of 2 (including the caregiver's own children under the age of 6).

## **Utah Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies**

Box Elder, Cache, and Rich Counties  
Child Care Resource and Referral -  
Bridgerland  
(435) 797-1552 • 800-670-1552

Weber, Morgan, and Davis Counties  
Child Care Resource and Referral - North  
Region  
(801) 626-7837 • 888-970-0101

Salt Lake and Tooele Counties  
Child Care Resource and Referral - Metro  
(801) 537-1044 • 800-839-7444

Utah, Wasatch, and Summit Counties  
Child Care Resource and Referral -  
Mountainland  
(801) 222-8220 • 800-952-8220

Iron, Washington, Kane, Juab, Millard,  
Piute, Sanpete, Sevier, Garfield, Beaver,  
and Wayne Counties  
Child Care Resource and Referral -  
Western Region  
St. George - (435) 626-4843  
Cedar City - (435) 586-8722  
Richfield - (435) 893-8333  
800-543-7527

Daggett, Duchesne, Uintah, Carbon,  
Emery, Grand, and San Juan Counties  
Child Care Resource and Referral - Eastern  
Region  
(435) 613-5619 • 888-637-4786

## **Department of Workforce Services Office of Child Care “Helping You Balance Work and Family”**

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### **OUR MISSION**

The mission of the Utah Department of Workforce Services is to provide quality, accessible, and comprehensive employment-related and supportive services responsive to the needs of employers, job seekers, and the community.

Visit our website at  
<http://www.dws.state.ut.us>

Department of Workforce Services  
Office of Child Care  
140 East 300 South  
Salt Lake City, UT 84111  
(801) 526-4340