

CHILD CARE...

sorting out what you see



Child Care Resource
and Referral

Working to meet child care
needs in Fresno County





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State licensing regulations require:

For Centers: One adult to every 12 children over two years old; one adult to every 4 children under two years old.

For Homes: Eight children to one adult, including the provider's own children under 10 years old, or fewer if infants under two are in care. Homes may also have up to 14 children in care when there are two caregivers.

If you have questions about adult/child ratios, you can call F.I.N.D. Care (559) 456-8195.



A Guide for Finding Quality Childcare

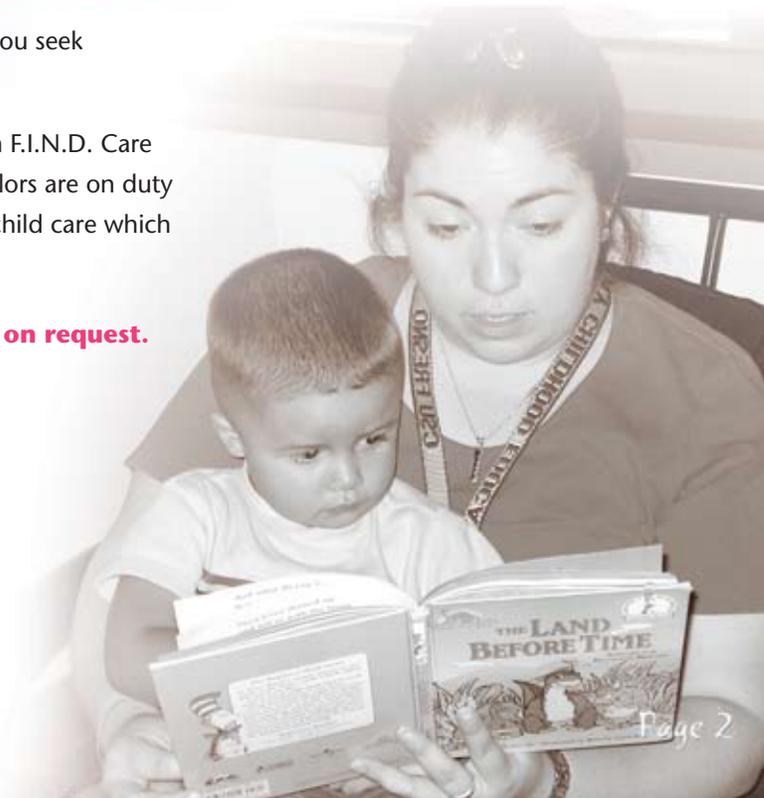
We hope that this booklet will help you “sort out what you see” as you seek care for your child.

Children’s Services Network provides resources and referrals through F.I.N.D. Care (Families in Need of Day Care) at no cost to parents. Trained counselors are on duty Monday through Friday from 9 am to 4 pm to help locate licensed child care which meets each family’s individual needs.

A copy of the Referral and/or Complaint Policy is available on request.

For more information call F.I.N.D. Care at (559) 456-8195.

Central Valley Children’s Services Network has been providing child care resources and referrals to families in Fresno County since 1976. CSN focuses on the broad development of children by providing programs and services to both parents and child care providers.





Visit! Visit! Visit!

A visit, or preferably several visits at different times of day, are essential for gathering and evaluating information that will permit you to make a wise choice. Of course, it will take time in your already busy schedule. PLEASE consider that this may be one of the most important decisions you ever will make for your child. Dedicate whatever time it takes for you to find the QUALITY care you and your child deserve.

F.I.N.D. Care provides Referrals Only – not recommendations! Your choice, your judgment is critical to your child's well being.

A LICENSE IS NOT A GUARANTEE OF QUALITY! California regulates the child care licensing process in order to maintain health and safety standards. However, "Quality Care" which provides an environment that enhances the social, emotional, intellectual, physical and linguistic development of a child is not regulated by the state. Therefore, you must determine the quality of the care through diligent evaluation. It is our sincere hope that the information in this brochure will aid you in that quest.

As a parent you have the right to licensing information related to potential providers under Oliver's Law. To obtain information call Community Care Licensing at (559) 243-4588.

Child Care Choices

There are many different types of child care, from child care centers and family child care to in-home care. Some care is licensed, some is not. Quality care may be found in any of these settings.

Family Child Care is offered in the home of the caregiver, who is often a parent. The provider can care for up to 8 children, depending on their ages. With an adult assistant, a family care home can be licensed for up to 14 children.

Child Care Centers (*Sometimes called nursery schools or preschool programs*) provide care for children – all or part of the day. Centers can provide care for infants, toddlers, pre-schoolers and school age children. Centers can be small or large and can be operated independently or by a church or other organization.

Head Start and State Preschools are available to low income families for children between the ages of 3 and 5. If you qualify for one of these programs, you will receive parent training, health information, meals or other social services. Most of these programs are half day.

Before and After School Programs are available at many elementary schools and other sites to accommodate parents who need to drop off their school-age children before school begins, or leave them at school until the end of the work day. Some before and after school programs are not required to be licensed.

In-home Care is provided by a friend, relative, babysitter, or nanny who cares for your child in your home, full time or part time. This kind of care is not licensed, but you can use **Trustline**, to find out important background information about caregivers. Call **1-800-822-8490**.

Home Care Providers (*License- Exempt*) may care for children from only one other family besides their own, in their home. There is no licensing for these providers. It is the parent's responsibility to inspect the home for safety and cleanliness. **Trustline is available for gathering background information. Call 1-800-822-8490**

Why Quality Child Care Mat

Decades of research have confirmed that quality child care and early childhood education are a critical determinant in the ability of children to develop physically, mentally and emotionally and be ready to learn when they enter school. The brain grows to 90% of its full size during the first three years of life. Of course the children need to be safe and healthy AND they must have a nurturing, loving, and stimulating environment that supports all of their cognitive growth. Choose carefully and your child, your family and your community will be the beneficiaries.

Choosing a Provider. What should I Look For?

- Does your child's caregiver have qualities which you admire... compassion, good humor, patience, fairness, respect, and honesty?
- Does the caregiver have a fundamental knowledge of the developmental capacity of children at different stages?
- Does the caregiver patiently help the children solve their own problems?
- Are you welcome in the home or center at any time of the day?



ters

- Is an effort made to listen to and patiently answer children's questions in ways they can understand?
- Does the caregiver provide a good model for children to follow?
- Is respect shown for the child? For example, by recognizing when a child is sad or upset or excited, or by not discussing a child in his/her presence?
 - What attitude does the caregiver have about toilet training, napping, mealtimes? How are mealtime and toileting accidents handled?
 - What is the caregivers attitude about discipline (i.e. an opportunity for positive guidance or for punishment)?
 - Is the caregiver someone you and your child like?
 - What is the caregiver's/teacher's early childhood training?
 - Is the caregiver committed to furthering her early childhood education?
- Does the caregiver meet basic requirements under law?



The Physical Setting

The room size, equipment and its arrangement must be safe, clean and adequately serve the number of children in the group. In a quality program, most of the day is spent in space divided to invite small group activities. The room arrangement and the placement of equipment and materials will allow you to identify different activity areas such as block-building, story time, and dress-up. Look for space that invites both quiet and active play.

- Is there enough space so that the children are comfortable and uncrowded?
- Are there quiet areas for quiet play and areas for very active play? Is there an area where a child can be alone if he/she wishes? Is this respected?
- Are there materials and equipment easily accessible to the children?
- Is there a special cubby/shelf/space for children's possessions and work?
- Is there an adequate space for the children to play outdoors? Is there variety in the kinds of activities available? Is the yard fenced? Is the area clear of all hazardous objects? (For example, sticks, broken glass, lawn mowers, broken toys)
- Is television and computer game usage monitored and limited?
- Are there areas for climbing, running, digging, water play?
- Are drinking and bathroom facilities easily accessible and comfortable for the children? May children use them as they need to or are these times restricted?
- Is the area kept neat? Is it cluttered, dirty, too clean? Is it attractively decorated? How does it smell? Is it well-lit and ventilated?
- Is there enough staff to give attention to all of the children in care?

The Program

Quality child care offers activities that are appropriate for each child's age interest and abilities. Materials are easily accessible. Children are encouraged to be actively involved in the learning process and to experience a variety of activities. There is respect for different family cultures and backgrounds. Art projects look creative and varied and express each child's interests.

- What is the daily routine? Is enough attention and time given to arrival, napping, toileting, eating and departure? These are important parts of a young child's day - just as important as crafts and activities!
- What kind of activities are planned for the children? Does the caregiver always tell the children what to do and how to do it or is there balance between being directed and choosing according to the child's interests?
- Does the daily plan include activities that are quiet and noisy, indoor and outdoor, individual and group?
- Are the interests of the children and their developmental levels considered in the planning?
- Is the process of learning while doing as important as the end result? Can children's work look like children did it – or must it look like the caregivers?
- Is there variety in materials used? Are there enough materials for all children?
- Are social skills (like sharing and expressing feelings) and living skills (like pouring milk and cleaning up) as important as learning colors, shapes and letters?
- Are the caregiver's expectations realistic for children in her care? How do you know?



The Business Side of Selection...

While cost and convenience are important considerations in selecting care, you will want to think of what is best for your child's age, personality, abilities, and interests. Once you have selected the day care setting, there are some things you can do to help the child care arrangement work out well for everyone.

Be sure that you and the caregiver agree upon:

- **The fee...** how much will you pay? Will you pay in advance? How often will you pay and when? Keep your side of the bargain. Pay on time.
- **Hours...** agree on arrival and pick-up times. Be prompt. Be sure you know the policy for over-time if there is one. Call if you are going to be late.
- **Vacation and holidays...** will you pay whether your child is there or not?
- **Sick days...** what arrangements will be made when your child is ill? What arrangements will be made if provider is ill?
- **Discipline...** do you know what methods of discipline are used? Do you agree with them?
- **Values...** are they consistent with your own?
- **Talk things over...** Many small problems can be solved by bringing them out in the open before they have a chance to become big ones.

Mistake made?

Sometimes, despite a careful search and selection of a quality program, you may find that your child does not adjust to or like the child care arrangement. Some of the reasons may be the particular makeup of the group, personalities of a few children, or size of the group. Listen to your child. If it is not in his or her best interest to remain there, follow your intuition and do something about it.

Listen to your child

- Toileting accidents
- Eating and sleeping patterns disrupted
- Unwillingness to be left with caregiver

Follow your intuition

- Examine your feelings about leaving your child in care
- Is your child picking up your guilt or uneasiness?
- Are you keeping your child informed about what will happen next?
- Is your child confused by rules or expectations between home and child care?

Adjustment period

- Have you allowed for period of adjustment?

It takes a young child time to settle into a new child care arrangement. Three to four weeks is not uncommon.

Making the change

If you are sure that these things are in order and your child is still showing signs of stress, then the child care situation might not be appropriate for your child.

If a mistake has been made in the selection of a caregiver, do not hesitate to change. Call F.I.N.D. Care again and make other arrangements for your child (559) 456-8195.





Children's Services Network

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