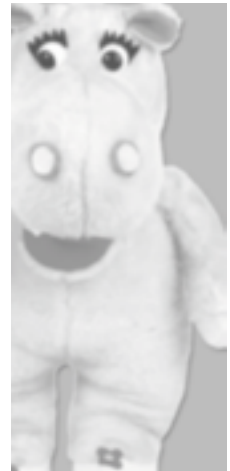
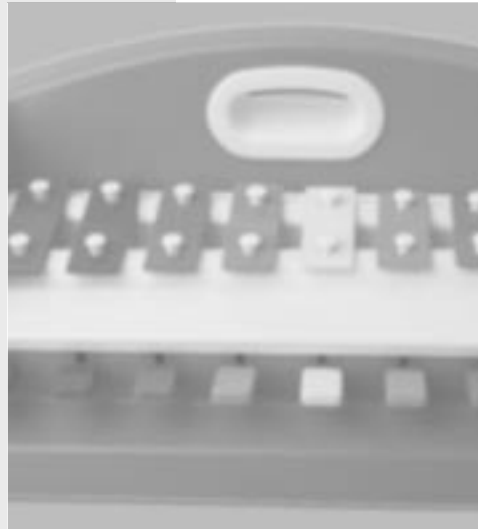

Parents' Guide to Selecting Quality Child Care



Parents' Guide to Selecting Quality Child Care is a publication of the State of New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department. Produced by CYFD's Family Services, Child Care Services Bureau, with special thanks to the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Division of Child Care.

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Dear parents,

We offer you this guide with the goal of helping you to make good choices for your children.

Every day brings with it new challenges for you and your child. One of your biggest challenges is choosing child care that meets your needs and your child's needs. We hope to make this decision easier for you by offering information and resources that can help you make an informed choice.

As you use this guide, please know that we share your concern for the health, safety and well-being of your children. Parenting can be one of the most rewarding jobs in the world. I hope this information helps you to be a successful parent and enjoy the rewards that come from helping your children to learn and grow.

Sincerely,

Mary-Dale Bolson, Ph.D.
Cabinet Secretary
Children, Youth and Families Department

Child Care Assistance

What is child care assistance?

Child care assistance can help you pay the cost of child care.

Who may apply for child care assistance?

Anyone who needs child care can apply. Your eligibility will be determined based on factors such as your income and family size.

What ages qualify for child care assistance?

From 6 weeks up to 13 years.

Who may provide care for my child?

You choose the care that is best for you and your child, such as a licensed center, home, after-school program or a registered family home.

How does my child care provider get paid?

The Child Care Services Bureau pays your provider each month based on a rate determined by factors such as family income, family size and hours of care.

What can I expect from my child care assistance worker?

Your child care assistance worker can answer many of your questions and provide links to important resources.

What does my child care assistance worker expect from me?

- To notify him/her before you change providers
- To notify him/her within two weeks when you have any changes in, for example, monthly income, household members, mailing address, etc.



Child Care Assistance

How to Apply for Child Care Assistance

Call or visit a Child Care Services Bureau Office. Call 1-800-832-1321 to locate the office nearest to you.

Bring the following with you:

- A completed and signed child care application
- Identification for adult household members (driver's license, picture ID card)
- Verification of income/employment (paycheck stubs for one month, letter from employer, child support, worker's compensation, unemployment benefits, self-employment income, etc.)
- Verification of school attendance, if applicable (class schedule)
- Proof of residence (utility bill, mortgage bill, rental agreement)
- Verification of relationship and age of children (birth certificates, baptismal certificates)
- Social Security cards for all family members



Child Care Options

When considering child care options, parents should think about their needs and their child's needs. Do you prefer that your child be in a home environment? Do you want your child to be exposed to a wide variety of children? Also think about the importance of location and hours of operation. Here's a brief overview of child care options:



• Licensed Centers*

- ... offer licensed child care in a variety of settings
- ... must maintain at least a 1-Star Level (see "Licensing and Stars Program" on page 6)
- ... often have a larger group size than homes and more than one classroom

• Licensed Homes*

- ... offer licensed child care in the caregiver's home
- ... are required to maintain at least a 1-Star Level (see "Licensing and Stars Program" on page 6)
- ... have a smaller group size than centers

• Registered Homes*

- ... offer registered child care in the caregiver's home
- ... must participate in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (this means that your child's caregiver is reimbursed for providing nutritious meals and snacks; see "Registered Homes

* Child Care Assistance can be applied to this type of child care.

and CACFP" on page 8)

- ... have a smaller group size than centers

• Head Start

- ... offers child care for preschool children; in order to qualify, you must meet the federal low-income guidelines (see "Head Start" on page 9)

• After-School Care

- ... is not required to be licensed or registered; check with individual after-school program and refer to "After-School and Summer Care" on page 18)
- ... Child Care Assistance can be applied to this type of child care if the facility is licensed

• Summer Programs

- ... are not required to be licensed or registered; check with individual summer program and refer to "After-School and Summer Care" on page 18)
- ... Child Care Assistance can be applied to this type of child care if the facility is licensed

Child Care Options

Licensing and the Stars Program

What is a licensed program?

Child care centers, licensed homes and some after-school programs follow New Mexico's child care licensing regulations (these regulations can be accessed at www.newmexicokids.org). Licensed programs offer various types of care in a variety of settings and must meet minimum licensing regulations. Licensed programs must have their license posted. Their Star level will be indicated on their license.



What is Look for the Stars?

- Look for the Stars is a quality rating system that contains five levels. The higher the Star Level, the higher the level of quality.
- 1-Star programs must meet minimum licensing regulations.
- Each Star Level requires a provider to continue to meet higher quality standards in the following areas:
 - **Staff training and education**
Well-trained staff help raise the quality of services given to children and families.
 - **Environment**
The environment affects the way children behave, develop and learn.
 - **Daily learning activities**
Daily learning activities reflect each child's individual interests, growth and development.
 - **Family involvement**
Family involvement helps staff make learning meaningful to children.
 - **Assessment**
Assessment allows staff to observe and document children's progress and share information with parents.



- **Ratios and group size**
Research shows that fewer children per adult and smaller group size result in positive outcomes for children.
- A license with five stars indicates that the child care program is accredited and has met the highest level of quality.
- As a program's Star Level increases, their reimbursement from Child Care Services increases.

Why was Look for the Stars created?

- To help parents identify quality child care programs.
- To encourage child care programs to continue to improve their quality of care.
- To recognize child care programs that provide quality child care.

How can Look for the Stars help me?

The number of stars on a child care provider's license tells you the level of quality criteria that program has met. A license will have one, two, three, four or five filled-in stars on it.

Child Care Options

Registered Homes and the Child and Adult Care Food Program

What are registered homes and what is family child care?

Family child care is the most common type of child care in New Mexico. If you are interested in family home child care, find out whether the caregiver's home is registered. Registered Homes are required to follow New Mexico's non-licensed child care requirements (these regulations can be accessed at www.newmexicokids.org).

What are some benefits of registered home child care?

Registered homes often have a small number of children, which can mean that children are getting more one-on-one attention. Homes also offer a setting in which children can learn by helping with activities in the home like cooking and gardening.

What should I look for when choosing a registered home provider?

- Refer to the "Child Care Checklists" (pgs. 14-20) and "Questions to Ask a Child Care Provider" (pg. 13).

- Since your child will probably be spending a great deal of time with the caregiver, his or her skills and personality are very important.
- Ask the caregiver about his or her policies.
- Discuss your schedule (your typical schedule, as well as planned vacations and possible changes in schedule).
- Find out whether the caregiver has a substitute or a second caregiver.

What is the Child and Adult Care Food Program?

The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) offers reimbursement to providers who serve healthy meals and snacks to children. Registered homes are required to participate in CACFP if they care for children during meal times. Check with individual centers, licensed homes, Head Starts and after-school programs to find out whether they are participating in CACFP.

Child Care Options

Head Start



What is Head Start?

- Head Start is a federally funded program for preschool children.
- The Head Start program is operated by local non-profit organizations in almost every county in the country.
- Children who attend Head Start participate in a variety of educational activities, receive free medical and dental care, have healthy meals and snacks, and enjoy playing indoors and outdoors in a safe environment.
- Head Start builds partnerships with families.
- Head Start provides services to children with disabilities and, in some selected sites, Early Head Start services are available to infants and toddlers.

Who is eligible for Head Start?

- In order to qualify, you must meet the federal low-income guidelines (to view the guidelines, go to www.headstartinfo.org/publications/im04/im04_03.htm).
- Your child must be between the ages of 3 and 5. (For Early Head Start, your child must be between the ages of 0 and 3.)
- Children from families receiving public assistance (TANF or SSI) are eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start services regardless of income.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Child Care Options

Head Start, cont'd

- Children in foster care are Head Start eligible, regardless of family income.
- Ten percent of enrollments are offered to children with disabilities.
- Children who come from families with slightly higher income may be able to participate in Head Start when space is available. Your local program can discuss this with you.

There are 30 Head Start grantees that operate Head Start programs throughout New Mexico. The names, numbers and addresses of the Head Start grantees are listed below. A grantee is the organization that administers the Head Start program and can have a large number of Head Start program sites.

Acoma

Acoma Head Start Program (505) 552-6959

Albuquerque

Youth Development, Inc. (505) 268-0024
City of Albuquerque (505) 767-6500

Artesia

Southeast New Mexico CAC
(505) 748-1141 or (888) 317-8647

Bernalillo

Five Sandoval Head Start Program (505) 771-5385

Dulce

Jicarilla Apache Head Start/EHS Program
(505) 759-3343

Hobbs

Child & Family Services Inc. of Lea County
(505) 397-7336

Isleta

Isleta Head Start Program (505) 869-3700

Jemez Pueblo

Walatowa Head Start Program (505) 834-7366

Laguna

Laguna Head Start Program (505) 552-6544
Laguna Early Head Start Program (505) 552-7541

Las Cruces

La Clinica de Familia, Inc. (505) 532-0515
Doña Ana Head Start (505) 647-8733 ext. 112
Las Cruces Public Schools (505) 527-5892
Home Education Livelihood Program (505) 523-2411

Las Vegas

West Las Vegas Schools (505) 426-2823

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For additional information, contact the New Mexico Head Start Collaboration Office in Santa Fe at (505) 827-8409.

Los Lunas

Midwest New Mexico CAP (505) 866-0466

Magdalena

Alamo Head Start/EHS Program (505) 854-2635

Mescalero

Mescalero Apache Head Start Program
(505) 464-9183

Mora

Mora/Colfax Head Start (505) 387-3135

Pine Hill

Ramah Head Start Program (505) 775-3355

Ruidoso

Region IX Education Cooperative Center
(505) 257-5025

San Felipe Pueblo

San Felipe Pueblo Head Start Program
(505) 867-2816

San Juan Pueblo

Eight Northern Indian Pueblo Council Head Start
(505) 852-4265

Santa Fe

Presbyterian Medical Services (505) 820-3448

Santo Domingo

Santo Domingo Head Start Program (505) 465-2728

Silver City

El Grito Head Start (505) 538-5459

Taos

Taos Head Start Program (505) 758-5819

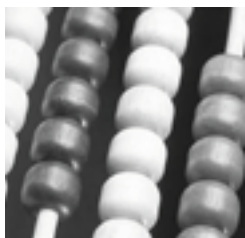
Tucumcari

Eastern Plains CAA (505) 461-1914 ext. 207

Zuni

Zuni Head Start Program (505) 782-5758

Steps in Choosing Child Care



Decide on what kind of child care best meets your needs.

(See “Child Care Options” on page 5).

- Do you want a relative to take care of your child?
- Do you prefer home-based or center-based child care?
- For what hours and days do you need child care?
- Where would the most convenient location be?

Contact your Training and Technical Assistance Program (TTAP) and tell them what your needs are.

To find the TTAP in your area, go to www.newmexicokids.org

Once you have received a list of child care options from your local TTAP, spend some time interviewing each center director/caregiver.

(See “Questions to Ask a Child Care Provider” on page 13).

- Begin by calling the providers and getting basic information about hours, ratios, cost, etc.
- Bring your child to visit your top choices (see “Child Care Checklists” on pages 14-20).

Call the references of the child care provider.

Trust your intuition.

Once you have made your decision, talk to your child about the transition.

If you feel good about it, your child will pick up on your confidence (see “Transitions” on page 25).

Stay involved in your child’s care.

(See “Parent Involvement” on page 21).

Questions to Ask a Child Care Provider

You should feel free to ask these questions—and any others—to either the center director or home provider. The answers to these questions should help you make your decision.



- What days and hours do you care for children?
- What is the cost?
- Do you receive Child Care Assistance reimbursement?
- Are you registered or licensed? What is your Star Level (see “Licensing and Stars Program” on page 6)?
- What is the ratio of caregivers to children?
- What experience and training to the caregivers have?
- How long have caregivers worked in the program?
- Who will be watching my child throughout the day? Will anyone I haven’t met be watching my child?
- What are your policies (regarding discipline, meals, naps, medications, illness, late pick-up, etc.)?
- Can I have a calendar that shows the days on which you are closed?
- Are meals and snacks available for my child? Or should he/she bring a lunch?
- What would a typical day be like for my child?
- Do caregivers have a daily schedule and list of activities?
- What is your [program’s] philosophy on child care and child development?
- Can I have a list of names and telephone numbers of families whose children you have cared for?
- Observe the caregivers and the children (see “Child Care Checklists” on pages 14-20).
- Look at all the spaces used by children (see “Child Care Checklists” on pages 14-20).

Child Care Checklists

Child Care Program

- Are parents encouraged to visit at any time?
- Does the program communicate with parents regularly?
- Does the caregiver have a schedule of balanced activities (both active and quiet, indoor and outdoor, free play, story time, naps, etc.)?
- Is there a variety of activities geared to the age levels and needs of the children?
- Is indoor and outdoor equipment safe and age-appropriate?
- Is the play area welcoming to children?
- Are there books, puzzles, games, blocks, drawing supplies, etc., within children's reach?
- Are children given their own space for their clothing and things from home?
- Are children encouraged to make choices?
- Are there opportunities for music and movement activities?
- Are there hands-on materials such as sand, clay, water, paint, dress-up clothes, housekeeping toys, etc., to stimulate creativity?
- Do children often experience success?
- Is television limited to creative children's programs, and limited in time?
- Do children look happy, active and engaged?



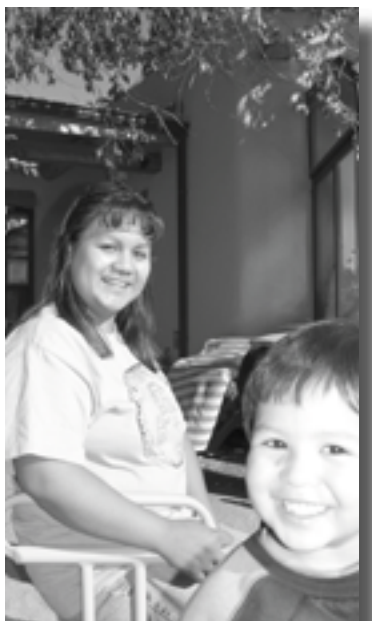
Health and Safety

- Can the caregiver see and hear the children at all times?
 - Are dangerous substances kept out of children's reach?
 - Are children exposed to smoking?
 - Do caregivers and children wash their hands often, especially before eating and after using the bathroom, changing diapers and blowing noses?
 - Is the diaper-changing area clean and safe?
 - Are the fire escape plan and emergency numbers posted? Is a fire extinguisher accessible and is there a working smoke detector?
 - Are all electrical outlets covered, and are electrical cords and space heaters out of children's reach?
 - Are there gates on the stairs?
 - Are blind or curtain cords out of children's reach?
 - Is the outdoor play area safe (dangerous areas fenced, play equipment safe and sandboxes covered)?
 - Does the caregiver have a first aid kit that is easily accessible?
 - Are cribs free of pillows, comforters, bumper pads, etc.
- Additional Health and Safety Items for Homes**
- Are guns locked up and kept out of children's reach?
 - Is the home adequately ventilated, have appropriate indoor and outdoor space for children, and free of clutter and breakable items?
 - Do pets have their shots and are child-friendly or kept away from children?

Child Care Checklists

Guidance and Discipline

- Are children encouraged to cooperate with others, think about other children's feelings and solve problems by talking things out?
- Does the caregiver recognize and encourage good behavior more often than correcting bad behavior?
- Does the caregiver set limits for children that are consistent and make sense?
- Are the limits simple and clearly explained to the children?
- Does the caregiver redirect children by giving alternatives when behavior is unacceptable?
- If time-outs are given, is the length of the time-out reasonable? (one minute of time out for each year of the child's age is recommended, not to exceed five minutes)
- Does the program prohibit all forms of physical punishment,



verbal abuse (yelling and criticizing), withholding or forcing of food, and neglect of any kind?

- Do you agree with the caregiver's beliefs on discipline?

Infant and Toddler Care

- Do caregivers understand that very young children are not yet able to communicate their needs through language and quickly respond to children's cries?
- Do caregivers talk, sing and read to infants and toddlers?
- Do caregivers recognize that babies eat and sleep when they are most comfortable doing so?
- Can caregivers see and hear infants and toddlers at all times?
- Do caregivers treat children with kindness and respect?
- Are babies always placed on their backs for sleeping? Are cribs free of pillows, comforters, bumper pads, etc.?
- Are infants held while being bottle-fed?
- Are diapers changed when wet?
- Do caregivers support and encourage children during the potty-training process?
- Is there enough space for children to explore and develop motor skills (including a soft space for infants to lay, roll and crawl)?



Child Care Checklists

After-School and Summer Care

Finding quality school-age child care that matches your child's needs and interests is an important job. Use your expert knowledge of your child as you visit school-age programs in your community. Here are the standards and principles you can use to guide your search:

- Staff are resourceful, caring people who understand the important role that adults play in school-agers' lives.
- Programs take into account that peer relationships are important to school-age children and use both mixed-age and same-age groupings for their activities.
- Most activities and experiences are child-selected. Schedules are flexible and children are not forced to participate in activities.
- Programs use positive guidance rather than punishment to help school-agers develop self-control and learn to behave appropriately.
- Space is appealing and flexible. It can be used for different kinds of activities and different sizes of groups.
- Programs provide a wide range of activities and experiences that contribute to all aspects of a school-ager's development by:
 - Fostering a positive self-image and a sense of independence.
 - Encouraging children to think, reason, question and experiment.
 - Enhancing children's physical development, encouraging cooperation and promoting a healthy view of competition.
 - Encouraging sound health, safety and nutritional practices and the creative, wise use of leisure time.
 - Generating an awareness of the community at large and creating opportunities for children's involvement in it.

- Does the program encourage children to relax and be comfortable after school?
- Are there places for children to spend quiet time alone, time with a friend and time in a larger group?
- Is there a quiet place to do homework for children who choose to do so?
- Do adults talk to children in positive terms and help children resolve conflicts?
- Is the program available during all out-of-school hours throughout the year?
- Are there a variety of challenging activities for children of all ages?
- Does the staff treat all children with respect, without showing favoritism based on gender, race, culture or other factors?

Summer Programs

Please refer to the checklist above, and also consider the following:

- Water is always available to children.
- Shady areas are easily accessible.
- Sunscreen is applied daily and is available when needed.



Child Care Checklists

Children With Special Needs



When looking for child care for a child with special needs, consider the following:

- Do caregivers encourage children's acceptance of each other?
- Are activities adapted to allow everyone to participate?
- Are caregivers willing and able to provide extra help to children who need it?
- If necessary, will the environment be adapted to meet your child's needs?

Resources

Family Infant Toddler (FIT) program
www.health.state.nm.us/ltsd/fit/
(877) 696-1472

The Family Infant Toddler program offers services to families who have concerns about the development of their young child (birth through age 3).

Parents Reaching Out (PRO)
www.parentsreachingout.org
(505) 247-0192

Parents Reaching Out is a non-profit organization that provides support to parents in an effort to promote healthy, positive and caring experiences for New Mexico families and children.

Child Find
(505) 298-6752 ext. 3316
Child Find offers screenings and services for children between the ages of 3 and 5.

Parents for Behaviorally Different Children (PBDC)
www.pbdc.org
(800) 273-7232
Parents for Behaviorally Different Children is a non-profit organization formed by families of children and adolescents with neurobiological, emotional and behavioral differences. PBDC provides individual advocacy, educational materials, and trainings and seminars for families.

Parent Involvement

Parents know their child better than anyone, and caregivers' experience, training and skills make them excellent resources for parents. Therefore, it is important that parents and caregivers work as partners to help children grow and learn. Some tips for successful parent involvement in the care and education of children are as follows:

Know what you can expect from your child care center or home.

Expect:

... to call the facility at any time with questions or concerns.

... to be treated with respect.

... to feel welcome.

... your child to be nurtured.

... your child to be in a secure environment.

... to have a clear schedule for the care provided.

... to hear about your child's experiences:

- learning activities
- child's progress
- special occasions such as field trips and/or special days

... to get help on child growth and development.

... to be linked to other resources when appropriate.

... to communicate with caregivers so that you can become an active partner in the care and education of your child.

How to become involved in your child's care:

- Communicate with your child's caregiver about your child's background, likes, dislikes, needs, etc.
- Have regular parent-caregiver meetings.
- Spend some extra time with your child during drop-off and pick-up.
- Volunteer to participate in activities such as:
 - story telling and reading
 - field trips
 - music and song presentations
 - cooking activities
 - sharing special cultural events
 - clean-up days
 - things that can be done from home

Early Childhood Information

Child Abuse

How to report suspected child abuse or neglect

The New Mexico State Child Abuse Hotline number is
1-800-797-3260

Recognizing child abuse

Signs of physical abuse

- Child has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones or black eyes.
- Bruising on baby (who cannot yet walk or crawl)
- Seems frightened, cowers or cries when certain adults are around.
- Is suddenly sad and depressed, aggressive or withdrawn.
- Reports injury by an adult.

Signs of neglect

- Child is frequently absent from school or child care.
- Begs or steals food or money.
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations or glasses.
- Is consistently dirty and smells.
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather.

Signs of sexual abuse

- Child has difficulty walking or sitting.
- Suddenly becomes very modest or does not want to participate in physical activities.
- Demonstrates excessive sexual knowledge or behavior.
- Tries to run away or tells others around about sexual abuse.

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Signs of emotional abuse

- Child shows extremes in behavior, such as complaining or demanding behavior or extreme passive or aggressive behavior.
- Is either inappropriately adult or infantile.
- Is delayed in physical or emotional development.
- Reports lack of attachment.

Signs of shaken baby syndrome

- Irritability.
- Vomiting.
- Poor feeding.
- Extreme tiredness or unconsciousness.
- Seizures.
- Difficulty breathing.



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Early Childhood Information

Child Abuse, cont'd



Tips for dealing with challenging behavior

It is easy to become frustrated and angry with a child who is not behaving. When you become angry, remember the following tips:

- Never shake a baby.
- Don't discipline out of anger; step away from the situation and cool off.
 - Take a few deep breaths and count to 10.
 - Phone a friend or family member.
 - Punch a pillow.
 - Take a quick walk or change the environment.
- Be consistent in your discipline.
- Be fair and realistic with punishment. Let the punishment fit the crime.
- Hitting, spanking or slapping are not appropriate ways to discipline.
- Don't compare your children with each other or to other children. We are all unique and need to be treated uniquely.
- Let your child talk through his or her feelings.
- Praise your child for doing something good.
- Show love and affection to your child.
- Remember—you are the adult.
- Seek outside help if you need it. We all need a little help sometimes!

Transitions

Making the transition to a new child care setting can be a stressful experience for children and their parents. The following tips should make the transition easier on both of you.

- Once you have selected the caregiver, visit the child care environment with your child.
- Talk to the caregiver about your child's needs and interests.
- Check with the caregiver about information and items needed for a smooth transition.
- Prepare your child's information and the things important for his or her care.
- Allow your child time to communicate feelings about the change.
- Let your child know that you approve of the new environment.
- Always say goodbye to your child before you leave, even if it seems easier just to slip out.
- Pick your child up from child care when you say you will (and let your child and caregiver



know if someone else will be picking him or her up).

- Develop a routine at home that is consistent with the routine at the child care setting (consider all areas that will change in your child's daily routine: basic schedule, eating and sleeping).
- Give your child enough time to get ready before leaving for child care.
- Make sure that your child's security needs are met—comfort items, special needs, contact with parent and pick-up time.
- Remember to let your caseworker know before you change child care providers.

Continual parent involvement and communication are key factors in making transitions easier for children and parents.

Early Childhood Information

Reducing Childhood Illness



As parents, we want to keep our children healthy. We can do this by being sure they get all of their immunizations, making sure their child care provider has policies that promote good health, and helping children develop good health habits. However, parents should expect their children to get sick while in child care—germs are spread easily. When your child is sick, keep him or her home. If your child becomes sick while at child care, pick him or her up as soon as possible.

Important health policies in child care

- Children and caregivers should wash hands thoroughly and frequently.
- Diaper changing areas should be sanitary.
- Children should not be exposed to smoking.

Healthy habits for children

- Hand washing
- Getting enough sleep
- Covering your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough
- Brushing teeth
- Eating fruits and vegetables
- Getting physical activity every day

Immunizations

Children need immunizations (shots) to protect them from dangerous childhood diseases. These diseases can have serious complications and even kill children. By immunizing on time (by age 2), you can protect your child from disease and also protect others at school or day care.

For more information, call

The New Mexico
Immunization Hotline
at
1-888-231-2367

The following vaccinations are recommended by age two and can be given over five visits to a doctor or clinic:

4 doses of diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis vaccine (DTaP)

4 doses of Hib vaccine

4 doses of pneumococcal vaccine

3 doses of polio vaccine

3 doses of hepatitis B vaccine

1 dose of measles, mumps and rubella vaccine (MMR)

1 dose of varicella vaccine

Be sure to use a vaccination record to track your child's shots.



Early Childhood Information

Nutrition



Healthy Eating Tips

Be patient. Young children may not be interested in trying new foods. Offer a new food more than once. Show your child how the rest of the family enjoys it. The food may be accepted when it becomes more familiar to your child.

Be a planner. Most young children need a snack or two in addition to three regular daily meals.

- Offer foods from three or more of the five major food groups for breakfast and lunch.

- Offer foods from four or more of the five major food groups for the “main meal.”
- Plan snacks so they are not served too close to mealtime, and offer foods from two or more of the five major food groups.

Be a good role model. What you do can mean more than what you say. Your child learns from you about how and what to eat.

- Eat meals with your children whenever possible.
- Try new foods and new ways of preparing them with your children. Both you and your children can be healthier by eating more dark green leafy vegetables, deep-yellow vegetables, fruits and whole grain products.
- Walk, run and play with your children. Don’t just sit on the sidelines. A family that is physically active together has lots of fun!

Be adventurous. At the store, ask your young child to choose a new vegetable or fruit, from two or three choices, for a weekly “family try-a-new-food” night. At home, your child can help you wash and prepare the food.

Be creative. Encourage your child to invent a new snack or sandwich from three or four healthful ingredients you provide. Try a new bread or whole grain cracker. Talk about what food groups the new snack includes and why it tastes so good. Is the snack smooth, crunchy, sweet, juicy, chewy or colorful?



United States Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
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Early Childhood Information

Literacy

Literacy doesn't just mean books and doesn't only apply to children who can read. The following information explains how to expose children to all kinds of literacy.



Infants

- Talk to infants (about what they're doing, seeing or hearing, what you're doing, events of the day, etc.).
- Tell stories and sing.
- Repeat words.
- Encourage them to babble by responding and echoing.
- Give them soft books.

Toddlers and pre-schoolers

- Read to them at least once a day. Ask questions as you read (it is best to ask questions that do not require a yes or no answer, like "Where do you think the duck is going?").
- Make reading a part of your routine (for example, a bed-time story).

- Tell stories, sing and share rhymes with them.
- Discuss the stories and relate them to their own lives. For example, you can talk about what they have in common with the main character. Or read a book about ducks and then go to the duck pond and talk about the book.
- Provide a variety of paper, writing and art tools.
- Encourage them to draw pictures and tell stories that go with the pictures. You can write their stories down for them.
- Take them to the library (most libraries have a story hour).

Toddlers

- Repeat! They enjoy the same book read over and over and books with lots of repetition.
- Encourage them to talk about what they are doing.
- Provide books with hard pages—at this age, reading involves seeing, hearing, touching, smelling and tasting.

Pre-schoolers

- Read the same book over and over (if they want): Pre-schoolers often learn how to read by memorizing the words.
- Provide them with a range of things to read: books, catalogs, magazines, calendars, etc.
- Let them read to you (this may mean that they repeat the parts of the story that they remember).
- Talk about books even when they're not in front of you.
- Talk about signs, letters, names.
- Play simple games.
- Tell jokes and riddles.

What you should see in a child care home or center:

- A separate library area—an inviting and comfortable space where kids won't be interrupted (for example, shouldn't be next to the block area).
- Many different age-appropriate books for children arranged so that the children can see their covers and reach them easily.
- Unfamiliar books should be on the shelf, as well as the old favorites.
- Literacy encouraged in ALL areas of the classroom (art, dramatic play, cooking, blocks)
- A variety of paper and large crayons, markers and pencils, as well as other art tools (age-appropriate).

Resources

Resource and referral:

www.newmexicokids.org

- Assistance with finding quality child care
- Parenting classes
- County resources
- Child care regulations
- Pre-K Initiative



New Mexico
State Child Abuse Hotline
1-800-797-3260

Children With Special Needs

Family Infant Toddler (FIT) program
1-877-696-1472
www.health.state.nm.us/ltsd/fit/

Child Find
(505) 298-6752, ext. 3316

Immunization info for parents

[www.health.state.nm.us/
immunize/public.html](http://www.health.state.nm.us/immunize/public.html)

NM Immunization Hotline
1-888-231-2367



Child Care Services Bureau/
Child Care Assistance
1-800-832-1321

Family Nutrition Bureau
1-800-EAT-COOL

Infant Mental Health
www.healthyhappybabies.com

Head Start

Head Start
(214) 767-2981
www.headstartinfo.org

New Mexico Head Start
Collaboration Office
(505) 827-8409

Early Head Start
(202) 638-1144
www.ehsnrc.org



Parent Organizations

Parents Reaching Out (PRO)
(505) 247-0192
www.parentsreachingout.org

Parents for Behaviorally
Different Children (PBDC)
(800) 273-7232
www.pbdc.org



MAKE TAX TIME PAY!

Claim all the tax credits you earned!

**Do you work for pay?
Do you have children?**

*...If yes, you could get up to thousands
of dollars for you and your family!*

YOU MUST FILE A TAX RETURN, AND USE IRS FORM 1040 OR 1040A, IRS Schedule EIC
(for earned income credit), IRS Form 8812 (for child tax credit), NM PIT 1, NM PIT 1-RC, & NM PIT-CG .

Whether you owe income taxes or not, you could qualify for:



Up to **\$4,300** from the federal Earned Income Credit

Up to **\$1,000 per child** from the federal Child Tax Credit

Up to **\$2,100** from the federal Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit

Up to **\$480 per child** from the New Mexico Child Day Care Credit

Up to **\$450** from the New Mexico Low-Income Comprehensive Tax Credit

Even if you did not get these credits last year, you may be able to get them now.

FIND OUT MORE TODAY!

For free help and information, please contact:

Tax Help New Mexico: 1-888-453-1304
*New Mexico sites that offer free tax prep for students,
seniors, and persons earning less than \$35,000 per year*

Catholic Charities: 1-877-724-4624
*An organization that can help low-income families
find the closest free income tax preparer*

AARP: 1-888-227-7669
*Prepares returns & answers tax questions for middle & low
income tax payers, especially those 60 years and older*

VITA: 1-800-829-1040
an IRS program that helps people fill out tax forms for free

Free Income Tax Preparation Sites*

Albuquerque: TVI campuses, Baredas Community
Center, Rio Grande & Del Norte High Schools

Las Cruces & Southwestern NM: Doris Ann
Community College, Community Action Agency (Las
Cruces & Anthony), Hidalgo Medical Services (Lordsburg)

Farmington: San Juan College

Gallup area: UNM Gallup, Catholic Charities,
Gathering Place (Thorsau)

Santa Fe & Northern NM: Santa Fe Community
College, UNM Taos, Luna Community College

**more sites statewide, please contact the groups listed to
find a site in your area!*

NEW MEXICO HUMAN NEEDS
COORDINATING COUNCIL



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