

Exploring Your Child Care Options

Child care is often a hard choice for parents, one filled with many emotions and questions. Parents want a positive environment that is safe and structured and that provides meaningful and enjoyable experiences for their child. Child care arrangements must also meet parents' needs by being convenient and available when care is needed.

Types of care

Michigan families can choose from a variety of child care options:

1. **Child care centers** care for groups of children, who are typically separated by age groups. These include day care centers, preschools and Head Start programs. This type of care requires a license from the state.
2. **Group day care homes** provide care for up to 12 children in a home with at least two caregivers. These homes must also be licensed by the state.
3. **Family day care homes** provide care for up to six children in a home. They must be registered with the state.
4. **Relative providers** are the child's grandparent, aunt or uncle, adult sibling or other relative over the age of 18 who does not live with the child. The relative provides care in his/her home and must be enrolled with the Michigan Family Independence Agency to receive FIA-disbursed child care payments.

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Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) program staff at MSU Extension can answer questions or help you learn more about money management, parent, food, nutrition and health issues. MSU Extension educators integrate university and community resources to provide tools that help families succeed. For more information on FCS programs in Michigan, call your county MSU Extension office. Check the government pages of your phone book for contact information.

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5. **Day care aides** are people over age 16 that parents choose to employ to care for children in the parents' home. Day care aides must be enrolled with the Michigan Family Independence Agency to receive FIA-disbursed child care payments.

How to find child care in Michigan

Child care is an important decision for parents and children. If possible, give yourself time to research all of the available child care options. To start:

- Talk with friends, family members, and co-workers about the child care they use, the locations and their feelings about the experience.
- Contact a child care resource and referral agency. The Michigan Community Coordinated Child Care (4C) Association can provide parents with lists of licensed child care providers in their community. To find a licensed provider, call 1-866-4CHILDCARE.

For more information on these and other parenting, money management, food, nutrition, or health issues, contact the MSU Extension office. MSU Extension Family and Consumer Science educators are located in all 83 Michigan counties to integrate university and community resources to help families succeed.

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Sources:

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