



# Speaking for Children

What's best for our youngest children is best for everyone!

## Quality child care counts

There are many types of good child care. Whether a child is cared for by a parent, grandparent, trusted caregiver or licensed child care facility, First 5 Sonoma County is committed to making sure that all environments are safe and nurturing. In California, 62 percent of children younger than five years of age spend at least part of their day in the care of someone other than their parents. Research shows that children in high quality care environments show more advanced language skills, do better in school and have fewer behavior problems and better social skills. Research also shows that teachers with bachelor's degrees and specialized training in child development provide young children with the best preparation to succeed in kindergarten.

Unfortunately, research shows that only one in seven early learning or child care centers provides a level of quality that promotes healthy development and learning. Eighty-six percent of programs have been found to be of "mediocre or poor" quality and more than 11 percent have been found to be substandard. There were similar results for family child care.

About half of children in child care attend licensed child care facilities. Due to the gap in availability and the high cost of child care, many parents turn to unlicensed or informal caregivers (family, friends and neighbors) who often lack formal training and who may not have the most current information on child development or parenting techniques.

Source: *First 5 California*



## Resources for Child Care and Early Education

**Community Child Care Council of Sonoma County (4Cs):** Child development centers and preschool for children (2-6 years), child care referrals, and a voucher program to help income-eligible parents pay for child care. Food program, training, and support for child care providers. Spanish spoken. Call 544-3077. [www.sonoma4cs.org](http://www.sonoma4cs.org)

**Head Start and Early Head Start, Community Action Partnership of Sonoma County (CAP Sonoma):** Early childhood education for children (3-4 years) from families with incomes below the poverty level and children with special needs. Spanish spoken. Call 544-6911. [www.capsonoma.org](http://www.capsonoma.org)

**Migrant Education Program:** The First Teacher Program teaches parents the skills necessary to prepare children for kindergarten. Free. Spanish spoken. Call 526-1272 x 20. [www.bcoe.org](http://www.bcoe.org)

**Professional Association for Childhood Education Alternative Payment Program (PACEAPP):** Helps low-income families pay for child care while they go through SonomaWORKS, the welfare to work program. Spanish spoken. Call 585-0600. [www.paceapp.org](http://www.paceapp.org)

**River to Coast Children's Services (RCCS):** Helps parents and guardians to find and pay for child care in West County communities. Parent and child care provider workshops and trainings Spanish spoken. Call 869-3613. [www.rccservices.org](http://www.rccservices.org)

## Finding quality child care

Selecting a child care provider is among the most important decisions you may have to make during your child's early years. After all, your child may spend a considerable amount of his or her time in their care. Before making a decision, it is important to find out as much as possible about all the child care options available to you. The following description will help you to understand the different types of care:

### Licensed Child Care

#### Family Child Care Provider

- Care typically takes place in the caregiver's home which is licensed by the state
- Hours of operation are flexible
- Provider must know CPR and enroll in health and safety classes
- There are children of different ages

#### Child Care Center

- More like a preschool, these licensed facilities are usually bigger in space and may be more structured than family child care homes
- Teachers must meet educational qualifications
- Can be operated by a school, individual, business, church or private agency
- Has certain hours of operation
- May group children according to their ages

### Unlicensed Child Care

#### In-Home Care

- Care takes place in *your* home when a friend, relative, babysitter or nanny looks after your child

#### Exempt Care

- The provider may only care for children from one family
- When a provider cares for children from more than one family she or he must be licensed.

### What to Look For In a Child Care Center

If you decide that a Child Care Center or Family Child Care Home will best suit your needs, here are some things to consider when making your decision:

- Referrals: Get a list of other parents that use a specific type of care and call them to ask their opinion.
- Research: Ask for DMV records if they are going to

be driving your children.

- Instincts: Hire someone you and your child both like.

Before making a decision, plan to **visit** while children are there. A few things to look for include:

- How does the staff interact with the children?
- Is there plenty of playtime and interesting activities for children to participate in?
- How clean and safe are the facilities?



Also make sure the facility has the right equipment. There should be places for your child to eat, have quiet time, read, build with blocks, do puzzles, put on dress up clothes, and play outside.

When **talking with the staff**, you should ask these questions:

- Is the center/provider licensed by the state?
- How many children is each caregiver responsible for?
- How do they discipline the children? - Hitting, yelling or shaking babies and children is unacceptable at all times.
- Do the teachers have training in early learning or child development, including college courses or degrees?
- How do they cope with emergencies?
  - Is the staff trained in CPR?
  - How do they deal with children who become ill?
- How experienced is the staff?
  - How long have they been working with children?
  - Find out what they like about working with children.
- Can you visit anytime?

**Once you make a decision, communicate with your provider about your child and his or her daily activities EVERYDAY to be sure the child care center or home is serving your child well.**

## About First 5 Sonoma County

First 5 Sonoma County funds children's health insurance and programs that improve childcare quality, help children succeed in school, and help parents provide safe and nurturing environments for their children. For more information on *First 5 Sonoma County* and its programs, please call 565-6626 or visit [www.first5sonomacounty.org](http://www.first5sonomacounty.org)