Quality Counts

Choosing Early Care & Education Programs

child care
resources
i n c.

*W*hat influences a child's development? In short, everything … from moving shadows on a wall, to the funny noise a toy makes, to the simple acts of being held or read a story.

A child's development is in constant motion, influenced by everything and everyone. This is especially true during a child's formative years from birth to age five when development is on a fast track and the brain is naturally laying the groundwork for the future.

But while nature begins the process, proper development must be nurtured and guided in stimulating environments, both in and out of the home. Children cannot do it alone. In every stage of a child's life, parents, family, schools – and for many children, early care and education and school-age child care professionals – need to provide children with every opportunity to learn.

With this collective support, children have the best chance to succeed physically, socially and academically throughout life.

Quality Counts is the second in a series of brochures. For more information, see *Compliance Counts* and *Planning Counts*!

Quality Counts
Choosing early care & education programs

Choosing an early care and education program is an important decision for any family. Finding a *quality* program is even more important. Why?

Research shows that a child's first five years are the most formative for the brain, providing a tremendous "window of opportunity" when the brain makes the connections necessary for learning. The first years of life have the potential to establish either a firm – or fragile – foundation for your child's future. As a parent searching for an early care and education program, it is your responsibility to identify the program that will help lay the best foundation for your child.

Defining quality early care and education is not simple. At the foundation of a quality program is its commitment and ability to support and nurture a child's healthy physical, social, emotional, language and cognitive development, and enthusiasm for learning. It is these domains that form the basis of a child's readiness for school and by which children are assessed upon entry.

How can you recognize quality? This brochure can help you. It presents the range of available early care and education program options, North Carolina's child care licensing standards and information concerning your responsibilities as a parent or guardian. CCRI's *Compliance Counts* and *Planning Counts* brochures provide additional information and come in handy when interviewing and visiting programs.

The search for the right program for your child takes time and energy. Choosing a quality program that is appropriate for your child and your family is a decision that will support your child's success in school and in life.

Early Care & Education Options

Center-Based Programs are independently operated or operate in schools, workplaces, individual homes (considered centers-in-a-residence), churches, synagogues or mosques. Most are open on a fixed schedule, eight or more hours per day, Monday through Friday. Children in centers are usually grouped by age. As they grow, children often move into the next age group with a different teacher. All centers must meet state licensing regulations for the legal operation of a child care facility.

Licensed Family Child Care Homes (FCCH) are operated by individuals who provide care in their homes for more than two children who are not related to them. These programs offer a home-like setting that provides the opportunity for siblings to stay together. A licensed FCCH may care for up to eight children, with no more than five preschool children in care at any given time. The caregiver's own preschool-age children must be included in the number of preschoolers. However, their school-age children are not counted for licensing purposes. FCCHs must provide age-appropriate toys and activities, nutritious meals and snacks, and meet basic health and safety standards. All FCCHs must meet state licensing regulations for the legal operation of a child care facility.

Legally Exempt Family Child Care Homes are allowed to care for two non-related children in addition to their own without being licensed by the state.

Part-Day Preschools operate for four or fewer hours per day and serve children ages birth to five. License-exempt part-day preschools may voluntarily seek state licensure and may also pursue national accreditation. Typically, part-day programs operate on the same calendar year as the public school system, serving families where one parent is not employed full-time. Faith organizations and community-based not-for-profit organizations sponsor most part-day programs.

Public Pre-Kindergarten Programs include center-based and school-based programs for three- and four-year olds that are fully or partially publicly-funded and operate under the direction of state, local, and federal education and human service agencies. For example, in Mecklenburg County, Bright Beginnings (sponsored by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools) is a program that serves educationally at-risk four-year-olds in school settings and in local child care programs.

NC Pre-K is a statewide, voluntary program that prepares eligible four-year old children for school success by providing them with high quality pre-kindergarten experiences. The curricula used are child-centered, have a literacy and language focus and include parent participation. NC Pre-K classrooms operate in centers and school settings for six hours per day, following the public school calendar, with no more than a one-to-nine staff to child ratio.

GS 110-106 (Religious sponsored child care facilities) are child care facilities or summer day camps operated by a church, synagogue or school of religious charter. While exempt from licensure, they must file a notice of intent to operate a child care facility with the state. A religious-sponsored child care facility may choose to seek licensure, but if it does not, it must still meet state licensing requirements with the following exceptions: staff qualifications, staff training, written activity plans and developmentally appropriate activity centers.

Head Start and Early Head Start are federally-funded programs that provide free, comprehensive developmental services for children ages birth to five from low-income eligible families. These programs are child-focused and family-centered.

Early Care & Education Options (cont.)

School-Age Child Care refers to programs for children before and/or after school hours and during school holidays and vacations. Family child care homes, child care centers, and schools typically offer this type of care. Programs that operate for four hours or less per day are license-exempt, but may voluntarily seek state licensure or pursue national accreditation.

Summer Day Camps are generally designed for school-age children and operate during the day for less than four months. They may be offered by child care centers, colleges, recreation sites, faith-based groups, or other sponsoring organizations. This type of program is license-exempt, but may elect to seek state licensure.

Other child care options include care by relatives, neighbors, a nanny or au pair, and mother's morning out programs.

Star Rated License

North Carolina law requires a child care program to be licensed if it serves three or more children and operates more than four hours a day at least once per week. Programs operating fewer than four hours a day or seasonally (such as part-day preschools, school-age programs and camps) are not required to be licensed.

The North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education (NCDCDEE) awards licenses with ratings of one to five stars. Ratings distinguish between programs that operate at minimum licensing standards (one star) and those that exceed minimum licensing standards (two to five stars), with five stars indicating that the program has met the highest child care licensing standards.

When visiting a program, check to see if a copy of its license is posted within easy view. If the program has a low star rating, ask why it received this rating, how it plans to increase its rating and the timeframe within which a higher rating will be sought.

According to state law, all new programs that apply for a star rated license must be assessed under a system that uses two components to determine the license points for the star rating.

1) Program Standards reflects the quality of care children receive and assesses child/adult interaction, materials and equipment available for children, indoor/outdoor space per child and staff-to-child ratio.

2) Staff Education reflects the education and experience of a program's staff, with higher points awarded to programs whose staff have higher education levels which positively impacts program quality.

Star Rated License (cont.)

All child care programs are required to have maintained a 75% Compliance History with state regulations during the previous 18 months. Finally, one "quality point" may be earned by child care programs that choose to meet additional education or programmatic criteria not addressed under the Program Standards or Staff Education components.   Some ways for a program to earn a quality point are reducing staff to child ratios, using an approved curriculum and obtaining higher education certification, credentials or additional training hours.

Rated licenses are awarded on a three-year cycle. A new child care center receives a temporary license from NCDCDEE. A new family child care home receives a one star license. Programs that change ownership or location are issued a temporary licence. After six months, programs may apply for a rating of higher than one star. Programs can apply for rating changes at any time.

Accreditation

Early care and education and school-age child care programs may apply for and receive national accreditation if they meet the quality standards set by the accrediting entity. These standards exceed the state's basic licensing requirements.

- *National Association for the Education of Young Children* and the *National Child Care Association* provides accreditation for center-based programs, part-day preschools and Head Start programs.
- *National Association for Family Child Care* provides accreditation for family child care homes.
- *Council on Accreditation* provides accreditation for school-age child care programs.
- *American Camp Association* provides accreditation for camps.

Staff to Child Ratios

A key program quality factor in a child care center is a low staff to child ratio, or number of staff compared to the number of children. The state considers this ratio when it calculates a program's star rating. The following chart shows the star rating ratio requirements for each age group. It also includes staff to child ratios for centers achieving national accreditation. Family child care homes do not have staff to child ratios because they are staffed by only one person who may serve a maximum of eight children. *(see page 4 for details).*

Staff to Child Ratios for Child Care Centers				NAYEC Accreditation (D)
Age	Ratio Requirements for the Star Rated License Program Standards Component			
	1 Point (A)	2 - 6 Points (B)	7 Points (C)	
Infants (Birth to 12 months)	1:5	1:5	1:4	1:3
Toddlers (12 to 23 months)	1:6	1:6	1:5	1:4
2 years old (24 to 29 months)	1:10	1:9	1:8	1:5
2 1/2 years old (30 to 36 months)	1:10	1:9	1:8	1:6
3 years old	1:15	1:10	1:9	1:8
4 years old	1:20	1:13	1:12	1:9
5 years old	1:25	1:15	1:14	1:9
6 years an older	1:25	1:20	1:19	1:11

Under the star rated license system, a child care center may receive up to 7 points in each of two components: Program Standards and Staff Education (see page 7). To achieve 1 point in the Program Standards component (the minimum allowed), a center must meet the staff/child ratio requirement in Column A. To achieve 3-6 points in Program Standards, a center must meet the ratio requirement in Column B. For 2 points in Program Standards, a center must meet the ratio requirement in Column B or meet specific classroom space requirements. To achieve 7 points in the Program Standards component (the highest number of points available), a center must meet the ratio requirement in Column C.

See Compliance Counts for minimum staff to child ratios for other types of programs.

Four Easy Steps to Choosing a Quality Program

Contact CCRI

How can CCRI help? When you call *Child Care Search*, a parent counselor will ask you questions regarding your child's and family's needs. You will then be provided with referrals to programs that meet those needs, including licensing and accreditation, hours of operation, program costs, type of care, preferred location and detailed program features. CCRI's comprehensive database of early care and education and school-age child care programs provides program information that is not available from the state.

Call programs

Once you have your list of early care and education and school-age child care program options from CCRI, call each program to confirm the information and check the availability of openings for your child. This is the fastest way to build on the referral information CCRI has provided and narrow down your options!

Questions to ask each program include:
- How many children are in my child's age group and in the class my child will attend?
- Can you describe a typical day?
- How many children are currently in your program?
- Is there a waiting list? If so, is there a fee to be on it?
- What is the staff-to-child ratio for the classroom my child will attend?
- Review the *Quality Checklist* included on the following pages for other questions.

In general, look for the following features when searching for a quality early care and education program.

▶ **Star rated license**
If licensed, does the program have a high star rating?

▶ **Few children per staff**
There is a small number of children for each staff member so each child receives individualized attention and care (see page 9).

▶ **Small group size**
The size of the groups is small to promote a nurturing, secure setting.

▶ **Developmentally-appropriate curriculum**
The program uses a plan to encourage learning and involve children in activities that suit their ages and developmental stages.

▶ **Positive interaction**
Children communicate with and learn from staff and each other.

Visit programs

The most important step in your search is to visit at least *three* of the programs on your list and look for clues that show each program's quality. While there, tour the program and observe the children and the staff. Ask questions -- about the staff and children, about safety and health issues, and about the setting and programming. Use CCRI's *Quality Checklist* to track important information about each program you visit.

Compare and decide

After your visits, review the checklist and compare what you've seen and heard at each program and determine which is best for your family's needs. Because your child may stay with a program for many years, it is important to know about your child's progress as he or she grows.

Consider the program's star rated license. If it's low, why is it low and what are the plans to achieve a higher rating? Get references from other parents using that program. Ask if their children enjoy the program. What do they like most and least about the program? Would they use this program again?

Above all, think about what is best for your child, use your instincts, and know that choosing quality is an important responsibility that will have a lasting impact on your child's life.

▶ **Consistent supervision of children**
Each staff member is responsible for the same children each day.

▶ **Well-trained, dedicated staff**
Staff is well-trained in child development and early education. The program has little staff turnover.

▶ **Ongoing family-staff communication**
Families are well-informed about their children's activities and progress and are encouraged to be involved in the program.

▶ **Clean, safe surroundings**
The program has clean indoor and outdoor areas with room for children to play and interact safely.

▶ **Healthy, safe and nutritious habits**
The program pays close attention to the health, safety, and nutrition needs of children.

The Next Steps

Once you have selected a quality program that best suits your family's needs, it's up to you to remain involved.

- Share vital information about your family and child and keep it up to date. Tell the staff about any special needs, fears, or physical problems your child may have.

- Keep important information about the program handy (vacation/holiday schedules, telephone numbers, emergency procedures).

- Be sure to read and understand all policies, paperwork, and mail you receive from the program. Read the parent bulletin board for important information.

- Let your child know you are interested in what he or she does at the program by visiting the program periodically during the day, helping with projects, and attending family events and parent conferences.

- Respect the program's staff as knowledgeable professionals. Remember, you are entrusting them with the care of your child.

- If you become concerned about something that's happening in your child's classroom or family child care home, talk it over with the program director or owner. If you think the program is not following state regulations, call **North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Education** at **(800) 859-0829**.

child care search

Questions or concerns?
Call our referral counselors at
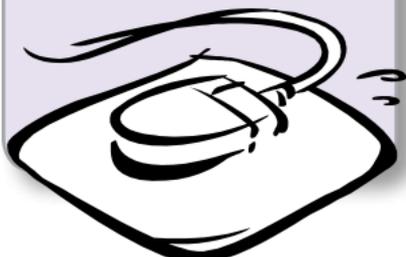*Child Care Search*.

Help is just a phone call away.

See back page for individual
county numbers

child care e·search

Do your own child care search
online with
Child Care eSearch.
Find it at CCRI's website at
www.childcareresourcesinc.org

Quality Checklist

Use the following checklist to keep track of the answers you receive during your search for quality programs. You may need to make additional notes as you ask questions.

The checklist is broken down into several categories covering a wide range of topics, from general program information to the needs of your child.

First, complete the *Program Information Chart* below for each program you visit. Then, use the checklist as you visit each program. Next to each question on the checklist are three numbered check boxes: ☐1 ☐2 ☐3 The numbers match the program numbers in the *Program Information Chart* below.

As you ask questions about each program, check the appropriate numbered box when the answer is "Yes." Leave the box unchecked if the answer is "No."

When you have visited all the programs you want to see, compare the answers and determine which program is best for you and your child.

Program Information Chart	
Program: ☐1	
Contact:	Phone:
Hours:	
Fees:	Star Rating:
Referral #1	Phone:
Referral #2	Phone:
Program: ☐2	
Contact:	Phone:
Hours:	
Fees:	Star Rating:
Referral #1	Phone:
Referral #2	Phone:
Program: ☐3	
Contact:	Phone:
Hours:	
Fees:	Star Rating:
Referral #1	Phone:
Referral #2	Phone:

Quality Checklist

✓ Setting

Do children have a place to store personal belongings?	1	2	3
Are there toys on low shelves within reach of infants, toddlers and preschoolers?	1	2	3
Are the furnishings the right size for the ages of the children in care?	1	2	3
Is the children's work displayed at their eye level?	1	2	3
Are there science or sensory activities that encourage the children to experiment and observe?	1	2	3
Does indoor and outdoor equipment such as low slides, push/pull toys and low climbing equipment promote physical activity?	1	2	3
Is there sufficient floor space in infant classrooms for cribs, and for infants to crawl and engage in nurturing activities?	1	2	3
Are learning centers and planned activities available outside?	1	2	3
Are there activity areas that allow for different types of play (such as a housekeeping area, cozy book corner, art area, blocks, etc.)?	1	2	3
Is the program accessible to and does it meet the needs of children with disabilities?	1	2	3

✓ Programming

Are learning goals set for each child?	1	2	3
Is there a curriculum that is followed?	1	2	3
Are infant activities (such as play, meals or napping) individualized?	1	2	3
Is a daily record kept on feeding, naps and diaper changes?	1	2	3
Is the children's work creative and individualized as opposed to looking the same?	1	2	3
Is there a variety of clean, developmentally-appropriate materials and equipment for the children, both indoors and outdoors?	1	2	3
Are there strollers or buggies to make outdoor visits easier?	1	2	3
Is there a variety of toys?	1	2	3
Are duplicates of toys available?	1	2	3
Is there a record, CD or tape player?	1	2	3

☑ Health & Safety

Are nutritious snacks and meals planned and served? Is there a menu posted for parents?	1 2 3
Does the program encourage vigorous play and plan physical activities that help children maintain healthy weight?	1 2 3
Are foods, bottles and medicines labeled with child's name and date and stored safely and appropriately?	1 2 3
Is there a staff member trained in first aid/CPR at the facility at all times? Is there a first aid kit?	1 2 3
Do staff follow health precautions such as using gloves and washing their hands and children's hands frequently?	1 2 3
Are the toys cleaned daily or as needed?	1 2 3
Can the diaper-changing surface be easily cleaned?	1 2 3
Are there clean and easily accessible bathrooms?	1 2 3
Is the outdoor play area fenced?	1 2 3
Are the children able to move between indoor and outdoor play areas safely and without difficulty?	1 2 3
Are the program's indoor and outdoor areas safe, free from hazards, and large enough for easy movement?	1 2 3
Are there separate outdoor areas for infants that include a variety of safe equipment?	1 2 3
Are safety gates used properly?	1 2 3
Are electrical plugs and radiators covered or protected?	1 2 3
Are there smoke and carbon monoxide detectors?	1 2 3
Are fire drills conducted on a monthly basis?	1 2 3

☑ The Children

Are the children allowed to select learning/play activities and toys by themselves?	1 2 3
Can the children choose not to participate in the activities?	1 2 3
Do the children have the opportunity to develop self-help skills as they grow, such as zipping, buttoning and tying shoes?	1 2 3
Are the children encouraged to solve problems constructively?	1 2 3
Do the children appear actively involved and interested?	1 2 3

Quality Checklist

✓ Staff

Does a staff member greet children warmly when they arrive?	1 2 3
Do staff seem to like and relate well to the children, to families and to each other?	1 2 3
Do staff use a warm and pleasant tone of voice with the children?	1 2 3
Do staff welcome questions and share information with families?	1 2 3
Do staff discipline the children in a caring, consistent and calm manner?	1 2 3
Do staff encourage the children to talk to teachers and each other?	1 2 3
Do staff respond to children's individual needs and do they provide one-on-one attention?	1 2 3
Do staff encourage self-help and independence?	1 2 3
Are staff actively involved with the children (i.e. on the floor with the infants)?	1 2 3
Are staff members required to have special training in early education and child development?	1 2 3
Is there an in-service training program and/or other opportunities for continuous staff training?	1 2 3
Does your child's prospective teacher/provider have a degree from a college or university?	1 2 3
Have the majority of staff members worked at the program for more than two years?	1 2 3
Has your child's prospective teacher/provider been there for more than two years?	1 2 3
Is there a diverse staff?	1 2 3
Do staff accept and respect cultural differences?	1 2 3

✓ Activities

Are the planned activities appropriate for the ages and developmental stages of the children?	1 2 3
Are activities planned that help children solve problems, express ideas and learn about the real world?	1 2 3
Do books, materials and artwork reflect cultural diversity?	1 2 3
Are daily activity plans posted and followed?	1 2 3
Does the program support early literacy by integrating appropriate activities into children's play?	1 2 3
Do activity plans provide for active *and* quiet play?	1 2 3

Quality Counts:
Choosing Early Care & Education Programs

Activities (con't)

Does the activity plan include an opportunity for music, fingerplays, books, art activities and outside play?	1 2 3
Is there an opportunity for large group, small group and individual activities?	1 2 3
Do activities encourage children to solve problems and think creatively?	1 2 3
Are children talked to, read to, and sung to by adults?	1 2 3
Do activities give children opportunities to learn new physical skills?	1 2 3
Are children taken outdoors daily, if weather permits?	1 2 3
Does the program schedule field trips and have written procedures?	1 2 3

☑ Program Policies

Does the program have a written statement that describes its philosophy and are you comfortable with it?	1 2 3
Does the program have a parent handbook with policies on discipline, illness, medicine or accidents?	1 2 3
Does the program keep records on children and their development?	1 2 3
Does the child/staff ratio meet state standards? (see page 9)	1 2 3
Is the group size small enough so children are not overwhelmed?	1 2 3
Is there a safe sleep policy?	1 2 3
Are there staff benefits (i.e. sick leave)?	1 2 3
Is there a plan for substitutes when staff are sick or on vacation?	1 2 3
Does the program have a policy on toilet learning?	1 2 3
Does the program have a plan for when a child is bitten?	1 2 3
Does the program have policies/procedures in case of accidents, injuries or emergencies?	1 2 3
Does the program have a plan and resources for children with special needs?	1 2 3
Are children's families allowed to visit at any time? Is there an "open door" policy?	1 2 3
Are family members actively involved in the program (i.e., members of an "advisory committee" or through teacher conferences)?	1 2 3
Does the program offer children's accident insurance?	1 2 3
Are families notified if the program is the subject of a pending (active) maltreatment investigation?	1 2 3

Affording the Cost of Care

Children are in their early *learning* years when parents are in their early *earning* years. That means you're likely to need a high quality child care program at a time when your budget most feels the pinch! A quality early care and education program can cost as much as in-state college tuition. Not surprisingly, child care is the second largest budget item for most families, exceeded only by housing costs. But don't be discouraged! The good news is that high quality programs are worth the investment, and there are a number of programs that can substantially offset or reduce your out-of-pocket costs.

Check to see which of these child care financial assistance programs may be available to your family:

North Carolina's child care subsidy program
If you reside in Mecklenburg County, call CCRI's *Child Care Search* at (704) 348-2181 to see if you are eligible. Generally, *child care subsidies* are available to low-income families who are working at least 30 hours per week or attend school at least 20 hours per week. Parents who are high school students must attend school at least 16 hours per week. If you reside outside Mecklenburg County, call your local Department of Social Services for child care subsidy. There may be a child care subsidy waiting list. CCRI strongly encourages you to put your name on the waiting list so you will be eligible for child care subsidy when additional funds become available.

Discounts, sliding fee scales and child care scholarships
Many child care programs offer *sibling discounts* with reduced rates for more than one child enrolled at the same time. Some programs offer a *sliding fee scale* with reduced rates based on family income. Child care programs, other agencies and even employers sometimes offer *scholarships* based on financial need. Check to see if these discounts or scholarships are available to your family!

Free public early care and education programs

> *Head Start* serves children from 3 to 5 years. *Early Head Start* serves children birth to 3 years. To be eligible for either of these free public programs, children must meet the age requirement by August 31 of the enrolled year, and their family must meet established income requirements (10% of children whose families do not meet income requirements may be accepted). Early Head Start is not available in Cabarrus County.

> *NC Pre-K and local district-based public pre-kindergarten programs* (such as Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools' *Bright Beginnings*) serve children who are 4 years old on or before August 31 of the school year and will enter kindergarten the following year. Eligibility for these programs is generally based on risk factors for poor school outcomes such as low family income, limited English proficiency, identified disability, chronic health condition and developmental or educational need. Children from Active Duty military families may also be eligible.

If you qualify for a free public pre-kindergarten program, it may be necessary for you to pay for before and/or after school programs to provide wrap-around care for your child, depending on your schedule. Still, these programs will significantly offset your out-of-pocket cost for quality early care and education.

Federal and state tax credits
One source of financial assistance that should not be overlooked is your income tax return. Many families like yours are eligible for federal and state tax credits that can significantly reduce your out-of-pocket costs for child care. Tax credits are dollar-for-dollar reductions in taxes owed that can add up to substantial savings, but you must file a tax return to access these credits! When filing, you will need to provide a Social Security Number (SSN) or Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) for yourself and for your spouse (if married) and for any children you claim.

Affording the Cost of Care (cont.)

Tax credits and income eligibility requirements can change from year to year, so please check with the IRS (www.irs. gov) or National Women's Law Center (www.nwlc.org) for the most accurate information. You may also contact *Child Care Search* for an updated flyer (available in late January).

Typically, the following tax credits are available each year:

> *Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)* is a federal tax credit for people who earn low or moderate incomes. EITC can reduce your taxes and supplement your wages by refunding some or all of the taxes that were withheld from your pay during the year.

> *Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit* is a federal tax credit to those who paid for care for a qualifying child or dependent in order to work or to look for work. The amount of the credit depends on your income, the number of dependents in your care, and the amount you pay for care. Additional dollars are available to families living in North Carolina.

> *Child Tax Credit (CTC)* is a federal tax credit available to families with children under the age of 17 that can reduce the income tax burden for families raising children. As with EITC, if you qualify, you get back some or all of the federal income tax that was withheld from your pay during the year. Even workers whose earnings were too low to have taxes withheld can get the CTC. Additionally, a Child Tax Credit is available to families in North Carolina.

You must file a tax return to be eligible for these credits! Even if you do not earn enough to owe income taxes, you may be eligible to receive a refund, so be sure to file a return each year.

Need help claiming these credits? You may be eligible for free tax preparation assistance. Please contact one of the agencies listed below for more information:

- **Internal Revenue Service (IRS)**
  Toll-free helpline: 1-800-829-1040
  IRS Website: irs.gov/Credits-&-Deductions/Individuals

- **North Carolina Department of Revenue**
  Toll-free line: 1-877-252-3052

- **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)**
  Check with your local VITA office

Dependent Care Assistance Program is an employer-sponsored spending account (also known as a flexible spending account) that allows for a certain amount of your income to be set aside before taxes to pay for child care. Check with your employer to see if this option is available to you.

You are strongly encouraged to take advantage of these benefits that can save your family thousands of dollars and help to defray the cost of quality care and education for your child.

Child Care Resources Inc.'s Complaint Policy

Child Care Resources Inc. (CCRI) is committed, first and foremost, to the well-being of children. Although CCRI is not a monitoring agency and does not investigate complaints about child care programs, CCRI does help families to make reports to NCDCDEE and encourages communication between the family and provider as a means to resolve such complaints and address concerns. CCRI also receives and documents reports from NCDCDEE regarding programs that are out of compliance.

To ensure children's well-being, CCRI has outlined a series of steps to help families handle concerns and complaints about the care their children receive.

There are three (3) basic complaints:
- Those that are not a violation of licensing rules and regulations;
- Those that are a violation of licensing rules and regulations;
- Those that involve child maltreatment.

When a family makes a complaint about a program to CCRI's *Child Care Search*, staff requests the name, address, and telephone number of the person making the report. This information is kept confidential unless CCRI is granted permission to use their name. The staff person documents the complaint and obtains information about the program and the specific incident or concern.

When CCRI receives a complaint that does not violate NC licensing rules and regulations, the complaint is documented and placed in the program's file. For those complaints that do violate NC licensing rules and regulations or involve child maltreatment, the family is encouraged to register the complaint directly with the appropriate monitoring agency (contact number will be provided at that time).

The family is advised that CCRI will also document the complaint and will report the complaint to the *Child Care Search* Director or designee who will, in turn, register the complaint with the appropriate monitoring agency.

When CCRI receives notice from NCDCDEE that a provisional, special provisional or probationary license has been issued, CCRI places the program on inactive status in its database. CCRI will mail a Notice of Action letter informing the program that it is now on inactive status and will not be given as a referral until CCRI receives a closure letter from NCDCDEE. In the event of a license revocation, the program will be removed from CCRI's database.

When CCRI receives notification from NCDCDEE that the program has returned to full licensing status, CCRI will send a letter to notify the program of its return to active status on CCRI's provider database.

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About CCRI

Founded in 1982, Child Care Resources Inc. (CCRI) is a private, nonprofit, resource and referral agency that works with families and communities across the Central Carolinas region to ensure that all children have access to affordable, high quality early learning and school-age child care opportunities that enable them to succeed in school and in life.

CCRI's services include:
- Consumer education and referrals to early care and education, school-age child care and other family and child support services for families in Mecklenburg, Cabarrus, Union, Rowan and Stanly counties (NC Child Care Resource and Referral Region 6).
- Training, technical assistance, on-site consultation and professional development to improve program quality.
- Financial assistance for income-eligible Mecklenburg County families to offset the cost of child care.
- Outreach to families to promote involvement in their children's development, learning and education.
- Child and Adult Care Food Program sponsorship for family child care homes.
- Supply and demand trends analysis leading to the development and implementation of targeted strategies to fill gaps in services.
- Consultation to employers on work-life policy development and early care and education and school-age child care community investment strategies.
- Public education to increase community awareness about and support for the needs of young and school-age children and their families.

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4600 Park Road, Suite 400, Charlotte, NC 28209
Child Care Search..(704) 348-2181
Other calls...(704) 376-6697
Fax line...(704) 376-7865

Union County Office
105-A Cedar Street, Monroe, NC 28110
Child Care Search.. (704) 238-8800
Other calls...(704) 238-8810
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Cabarrus County
Child Care Search..(704) 786-1024

Rowan County
Child Care Search..(704) 210-1008

Stanly County
Child Care Search..(704) 550-0103

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