



# Finding Child Care in Meriden

## What to look for in a preschool or child care program



There are a number of options to choose from when looking at child care settings. Programs can be different in a number of ways, sometimes making your choice confusing. Below you will find information to help you choose a program that best fits the needs of your child and family. You may want to look at several types of care before making your decision.

### Licensed Care

This type of child care must meet requirements of the State Department of Public Health (DPH). These requirements mainly address health and safety issues. DPH inspects licensed programs on a regular basis and may also conduct unannounced inspections.

- **Family Child Care** – an individual approved by the Connecticut State Department of Public Health to provide care in their own home. Care can be provided for up to six full time children, with only two of these children being under the age of two years.
- **Group Homes** – a program licensed by the Connecticut State Department of Public Health that provides care for seven to twelve children. In group homes and child care centers, children are often grouped by age.
- **Child Care Centers** – a program licensed by the Connecticut State Department of Public Health that provides care for thirteen or more children. For infants and toddlers (0-36 months), group size is limited to eight children. There must be one adult for every four children. For preschoolers (3-5 years) and school age children (5-12 years) group size is limited to twenty children. There must be one adult for every ten children.

### Unlicensed Care

This type of child care is informal and therefore does not need to meet any state requirements.

- **Relative Care** – care provided by a close relative such as a child’s grandparent, aunt or uncle -- either in the home of the relative or the child.
- **In-home Care** – care provided by a caregiver in the child’s home, i.e., a nanny, babysitter or an au pair.

### Quality

When searching for child care, quality matters most. Research shows that a young child’s development is positively affected by quality child care. Quality care includes a warm, loving relationship with a caregiver, an exciting learning environment, and a safe setting.

- Quality can be found in any type of child care arrangement.
- There is no “right” or “best” type of care.
- Quality is not determined by the title a program uses to describe itself (i.e. Child Care vs. Nursery School)
- Consider and visit different options.
- Choosing a program for your child is a very personal decision; what works for your friend may not be the best choice for your family.
- After you do your research, remember to trust your instincts.

### Questions to Ask

Below are some questions you may want to ask when you are searching to find a child care provider that meets your needs:

- Are you licensed?
- Are you accredited?
- What hours are you open?
- How many children are currently in your care?
- What are the ages of the children in your care?
- How much do you charge?
- What is your policy on payment during holidays, vacations, and sick days?
- What is your policy when a child is ill/you are ill?
- Are you certified to give medications?
- Are you current with your first aid and CPR certification?
- How long have you been in the child care field?
- What is your experience/education?
- What is the experience/education of your staff?

- What activities would my child experience?
- How do you help my child learn new skills?
- How will you accommodate my child with special needs?
- How do you handle discipline?
- Do you have a written discipline policy?
- Do you help with toilet training or does my child need to be toilet trained?
- What meals/snacks do you provide?
- Do you provide transportation or go on field trips? If yes, do you provide car seats or do parents? Do you have insurance?
- What school districts do you serve?

If your child speaks English as a second language, ask:

- Does anyone on your staff speak my child's language?
- Do other children in your care share my child's culture?

## Paying for Child Care

Many families find it a challenge to pay for child care. In Connecticut, there are some resources available to help eligible families pay for child care.

The **Care 4 Kids Program** is a state program that assists eligible families to pay for child care. The Care 4 Kids subsidy can be used for care:

- In a child care center
- In a licensed family child care home
- By a relative
- By an in-home caregiver (i.e. babysitter or nanny).

Care 4 Kids will pay a portion of the weekly/monthly child care fee; parents will often need to pay the provider an additional

amount (i.e. the "family fee"). To receive Care 4 Kids payments, the applicant must either be:

- Working,
- In an approved training program through the Jobs First Employment Services Program
- Or a teen parent attending high school.

To find out more call 1-888-214-5437 or visit [www.care4kids.org](http://www.care4kids.org).

## Sliding Scale Programs

Some child care programs offer a sliding scale reduction to parents. This scale decides how much a family will pay based on their income and family size. Parents are encouraged to ask programs if they offer a sliding scale. Some examples of programs that operate on a sliding scale are:

- **Head Start** – a federally funded center for children ages 3-5 years old that runs part time/part year at no cost, but may also have a full time/full year program based on a sliding scale.

*Head Start and Early Head Start services are not available in all communities*

- **School Readiness** – a state funded program for children ages 3-5 years old that is available in urban areas and some rural/suburban communities. Town residency is required to qualify for this program. Call 630-4236 for more information.

- **State Funded Centers** – a state funded program that services mostly children ages 3-5 years old.

## Preparing Your Child

To best prepare your child for child care, you may want to do the following things:

- Before your child begins child care, visit the program together. This will give your child a chance to meet with the provider(s) and other children.

- Talk positively with your child about the program or provider. Even if you are nervous about leaving your child for the first time, try to stay positive so your child doesn't pick up on your fears. In time, your comfort level will increase.

- You can talk to your child about what will happen during the day at child care. You may want to remind your child that this is his/her special place to be while you are at work or training.

- If possible, be prepared to stay briefly for the first few days until your child becomes familiar with the setting. It also allows you to ask questions of the provider and get to know that person better.

- Bringing a favorite toy, doll, blanket or family picture will help your child feel more comfortable, especially when it is time to say goodbye.

- Children react to separation in many different ways. It can be normal for your child to cry during drop off. Having a consistent goodbye routine will help your child adjust. Offer your child a hug and kiss and tell him/her when you will be back. Ask your child care provider for suggestions if your child is having a difficult time adjusting.

- Never leave without saying "goodbye" – It might make your child feel like he/she cannot trust you.

- When your child is well rested and has an unrushed morning at home, it will be easier for him/her to start their day in child care.

- Many families find it easier to pick out clothes and pack lunches the night before.

- Before you know it, the daily separations and the joy of being together again will be part of your day to day life.

## For more information on finding the right child care for your child:

Call 211 or visit <http://search.211childcare.org> for great information on family childcare programs. Visit online or call each program directly to find out costs, location, hours of operations and other questions you may have.

For **playgroups** for young children contact the **Meriden Family Resource Centers** at 238-2316. **Story times** are held at the **Meriden Public Library** at 630-6347.

## School Readiness Programs

State of Connecticut helps make some childcare programs more affordable. Contact School Readiness in Meriden at 630-4236 or visit [www.cityofmeriden.org](http://www.cityofmeriden.org)

## Meriden Children First Initiative

Visit [www.meridenchildrenfirst.org](http://www.meridenchildrenfirst.org)

Let us know your comments on this flyer! Call 630-3566.

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