

legally but with less oversight or monitoring. It is always important to verify that the program is regulated by either child care licensing or DOE. This ensures that there are minimum health and safety standards that the program must follow.

Like all child care programs, school-age programs can choose to go above and beyond basic health and safety requirements to increase the quality of their care. In your state they may be eligible to participate in the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). QRIS rates child care programs based on the quality of their care. However, some QRIS programs do not allow school-age programs to participate. School-age programs can also earn a national accreditation by meeting higher standards than the basic licensing requirements. The Council on Accreditation (COA) is one organization that accredits school-age programs.



WHO WE ARE

Child Care Aware® of America is our nation's leading voice for child care. We advance a child care system that effectively serves all children's growth, development and educational advancement and creates positive economic impact for families and communities.

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Selecting a Quality School-Age Child Care



School-age child care usually refers to programs for children from kindergarten through 12 years of age. These programs offer before-school care, after-school care, school break/summer care, or a combination of those.

Why is a quality school-age program important for your child?

Quality child care offers positive learning experiences and nurturing relationships with trusted adults who understand child development. A quality school-age child care setting will have caregivers who know how to meet the physical, emotional, and developmental needs of school-age children. They will recognize that children in different age groups have unique needs.

When you know that your child is in a safe and quality program that they enjoy, you are able to be more productive at work and school. School-age child care provides a safe place for children to spend their out-of-school hours while you're away. This type of care also gives them additional opportunities to engage in activities with their peers and receive academic support.

What types of school-age programs are available?

School-age child care can be found in a variety of different settings. Some before- and after-school programs may be offered on-site at your child's elementary school. Others may be provided through community organizations like the YMCA or Boys and Girls Club. Some child care centers and family child care homes also offer care for school-age children. In addition to providing child care before and after school, many of these settings offer summer camp programs or care during school breaks, and some of them may be activity-based.

What credentials can school-age programs have?

Many school-age programs have a state child care license, but it is not always required. For instance, if a program is located on school grounds and run by school employees, it may be regulated by the Department of Education (DOE) instead of child care licensing. Other programs may be legally exempt from licensing. This can mean that they are operating



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What are some things to consider when selecting a school-age program?

In addition to the type of child care setting and the program's credentials, consider other factors like how they handle transportation and what activities are offered. A quality program will have a variety of activities to choose from that will be offered in a structured environment.

When choosing a before-/after-school program, think about:

Outdoor Time. Many children do not get enough outdoor time or big body play during the school day. It is a good idea to make sure their before-/after-school program offers opportunities for outdoor activities and a back-up plan for bad weather (like using the school gym).

Academic Support. If your child will need time to complete homework or projects after school, you will want to make sure there is quiet space where they can work. Consider whether they will have access to a computer if needed and whether the teachers are able to provide homework help.

Interest-Based Activities. The hours before and after school are great times to socialize with peers and participate in activities that spark a child's interest. Does the program offer activities based on the children's interests, such as science experiments, nature walks, music, and sports?

Transportation. If the child care program is not located on school property, you will need to consider how your child will get to and from school. Some school-age programs offer transportation to specific schools. If they are not able to provide transportation, is the child care provider on a school bus route?



When choosing a summer camp or school break care, think about:

Field Trips. Field trips are a great way to learn and have new experiences. Some summer camps offer field trips to museums, the zoo, outdoor parks, and other exciting places. Before selecting a program, ask to view the field trip schedule. Decide whether you think your child will be interested in the planned trips. Ask about the chaperone policy and the adult to child ratio on day trips.

Pool Time. Some summer camps have easy access to a pool and may make swimming a daily or weekly activity. Consider if pool time is important to you and your child and if you feel comfortable with them swimming at camp. Low adult to child ratio is especially important at the pool. Ask how many adults per child are required for these trips.

Themed Camps. Many summer camps offer themed camp weeks. Does your child have a specific interest, like sports, drama, music, animals, or science? You can encourage and support their interests by finding a themed camp or a program that offers activities in those areas.

VISIT!

When you tour programs, ask questions and look for indicators of quality child care. These include health and safety measures, cleanliness, positive interactions, engaged and happy children, a variety of toys and materials, and more! For a complete checklist, visit www.childcareaware.org to download a list of questions to take with you on your tours.