

Getting the Most Out of Child Care

A YoungStar Guide for Families

Placing your child in another's care isn't easy. It takes trust and teamwork to create a safe, happy place for kids to learn and grow.

When you make sure your child care provider has all the information and support necessary to provide excellent care, you help give your child the best possible start.

Doing your part is easier than you might think. Check out these simple tips to help you get the most out of your child care partnership.

Be Engaged

Stay Up-to-Date

Many providers use email, newsletters and even text messages to keep parents up-to-date on program news, as well as a child's activities. Stay up to date with any changes happening with your program and ask your child's teacher for updates on a regular basis.

Teach at Home

When you know what your child is learning in school, you can reinforce those lessons at home. Ask your provider about the topics, games, storybooks and experiences your child participates in during the day. And ask your child each day what she or he did and learned.

Ask for a Progress Report

By the time children are three years old, their brains are almost 90% fully developed. They're learning so much every day, it's hard to keep up. That's why it's a good idea to meet with your child care provider on a regular basis—not just at drop-off and pickup times—so you can talk about your child's development and behavior at home and away from home.

Pitch In

Add Yourself to Activities

Providers love when parents help out with a special activity, such as a field trip or show-and-tell. Children also love to see their family taking part in their classroom. Volunteer to be a chaperone or parent advisor. Ask to participate in music or reading time. You could even share a skill, craft or special experience with the class.

Connect with Other Families

Look for opportunities to interact or connect with other families enrolled in the program. Who knows, you might find a new friend to chat with or have just the skill another family is looking for. Remember, every family has so much to offer, including yours.

1-888-713-5437 (Toll-free) 711 (TTY)

youngstar.wi.gov



Wisconsin Department of
Children and Families



Using YoungStar Is Easy

Visit youngstar.wi.gov to compare child care providers and find helpful parenting advice.

Look for the **YoungStar rating window sticker or certificate** when you're interviewing providers.

Call **1-888-713-KIDS (5437)** to get personalized help from a local child care resource and referral specialist.

Want to Learn More?

At youngstar.wi.gov, parents can watch videos, download articles and find useful information on early childhood education, nutrition and more. You can even discover activities that encourage healthy brain development.

Be Prepared

Tell Your Provider Everything

Want your child to receive individualized care? Start by sharing important details about your child. This includes essential information such as allergies and medication requirements, your child's likes and dislikes, food preferences, and sleep schedule. The more your provider knows, the better they are at individualizing your child's care.

Ease Your Child In

The first few days in a new place are scary for anyone. For children starting at a child care center, the transition can be especially difficult. They may not want to go (or let you leave). Give yourself and your child extra time for drop-offs during the first few days. It may help soothe their anxieties (and yours too).

Have Backups

Extra clothes. Extra snacks. More than one way to reach you. Prepare your child care team for food spills, bathroom accidents and other problems with a little preplanning. And remember to switch those backups out as the weather (or your schedule) changes.

Be Considerate

Stick to the Schedule

Most child care programs have specific drop-off and pickup times for a reason. After all, providers and staff have families too. Being on time makes things easier for everyone. And remember to look for changes to your program's schedule around the holidays. It will help you avoid surprises.

Make Regular Payments

Many providers have clear payment expectations laid out in their parent contracts or handbooks. Staying on top of your child care bill means no one has to worry about your child's enrollment status. If there are disputes or delays, keep communicating. And try to settle the issue as quickly and agreeably as possible.

Say Thanks

It's always nice to hear an encouraging word. Many times providers only hear from parents when something has gone wrong. If you're happy with your child care experience, let your provider know. A little kindness is always appreciated.

The Department of Children and Families is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access services, receive information in an alternate format, or need information translated to another language, please call the Division of Early Care and Education at 608-422-6002. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or speech disabled can use the free Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) – 711 to contact the department.