



Early childhood services: Child Care

Key Messages

- Children benefit from playing and learning with other children
- Choose an Education and Care Service that is right for you
- Ask the service about how they will support your child
- Talk to the service about your child's additional needs

Children benefit from playing and learning with other children

Going to a Child Care service can help your child with:

- Making friends
- Learning to negotiate with others and make choices and decisions
- Developing self-confidence
- Having opportunities to learn
- Encouraging physical development
- Learning to manage emotions and encouraging positive behaviours

Choosing an education and care service

There are different types of Child Care services. These services operate for different hours and support different aged children and include:

- Family day care
- Kindergarten or preschool
- Long day care
- Outside school hours care

Finding a good service

Early Childhood Education and Care services across Australia are required to meet national standards to make sure your child is safe and has opportunities for learning and development. Services are given a National Quality Standard rating (NQS) to help families choose the best service for their child and family.

More information about the ratings can be found here:

<https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/at-a-service/service-quality-ratings>. When you have decided what your needs are you can search for services near you using this website: <https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/find-child-care>

There are other types of early childhood services like occasional care, In Home Care, crèches, mobile services and some school holiday care programs are not regulated by national standards. They may be regulated under state or territory legislation.

Finding a service that meets your needs

Once you have decided what your family needs, you can start to contact services. You should be ready to ask questions such as:

- What hours are you open?
- What times can I drop off and pick up my child?
- Do you close for any time during the year and for how long?
- Will I be able to visit my child or call the service at any time?
- Will I be charged fees for public holidays or when my child is not there?
- Do you provide things like nappies and meals, or do I need to bring them from home?



- Will I be eligible for any subsidies or other financial assistance?

Remember: Many services have waiting lists so you may have to enrol in a more than one.

If your child has additional needs

If your child has additional needs, then you need to specifically ask the service how they will support your child. For example, ask how the service will:

- Help your child settle into the service
- Get to know your child's strengths and interests
- Learn about your child's needs and how these can be supported
- Plan activities your child will enjoy
- Adapt activities and daily routines to support your child to participate
- Help the children and other adults understand your child
- Respect your family's and children's rights to confidentiality
- Communicate with you about your child's progress and experiences
- Let you know if they have any concerns about your child
- Record daily information about your child such as details relating to toileting, eating habits, and their behaviour with other children.

What you can tell the service

There are many things you can share with the educators at your service to help your child settle in and be supported. You can help the staff at the service by telling them:

- What your child's main needs are
- What their interests are
- What they do well
- What you do to support your child, for example, if they are upset
- Situations or activities that can be challenging for your child
- How your child communicates they are distressed or not coping
- The other support your child gets, including through hospitals, the NDIS or other therapists

It is helpful if you give permission to the Child Care service to contact your child's other supports. The more information that you provide about your child's needs and supports the better the Child Care service can prepare and help.

Support for children with additional needs

All children have the right to use Child Care in Australia regardless of disability. This right is protected under the Australian Disability Discrimination Act 1992. Your Child Care service may talk to you about support for children with additional needs. The Australian government funds resources to support children with additional needs through the Inclusion Support Program. The Inclusion Support Program (ISP) assists education and care services to provide inclusive practices in early learning programs for all children. This is to help children with additional needs to access service and participate alongside their peers.

How do I start?

- Talk to friends and family about services that they know about.
- Talk to the other people who support your child about what would help your child.
- Make a list of Child Care services that suit your needs.
- Call and make appointments to visit.

Additional resources



The Australian Government website [StartingBlocks.gov.au](https://www.startingblocks.gov.au) has lots of useful information. It can be found at: <https://www.startingblocks.gov.au/>