



**START EARLY  
START STRONG  
QUALITY EARLY LEARNING**

# FIND THE RIGHT CHILD CARE PROGRAM FOR YOUR FAMILY

Your child's brain grows and develops quickly during the first years of life. This means that birth through age five is a critical time for learning and development. Licensed, quality child care and preschool programs help children prepare for success in school and beyond.

Colorado Shines rates the quality of Colorado's child care and preschool programs. We also connect families with licensed, quality programs in their community and resources to support early learning. Visit [ColoradoShines.com/Families](https://ColoradoShines.com/Families) to learn more.

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT PROGRAM — WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

### LEARN ABOUT YOUR OPTIONS

Decide what type of child care is best for your family (a center, family child care home, Head Start). The Colorado Shines Child Care Resource and Referral line has information on all the options. Call [1.877.338.2273](tel:1.877.338.2273) or text "child care referral" to [898-211](tel:898-211).

### SEARCH FOR A LICENSED QUALITY CHILD CARE PROGRAM

The Colorado Shines Child Care Resource and Referral line can give you a list of available child care programs in your community and see if you qualify for financial support, like the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP). Or search for programs online at [ColoradoShines.com/Search](https://ColoradoShines.com/Search).

### VISIT AND ASK QUESTIONS

Visit programs in-person and talk with the providers. Use the Child Care Checklist on the next page as a guide to the most important things to look for and key questions to ask.

### TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

Colorado Shines allows you to research the licensing history and the monitoring reports of child care programs. Visit [ColoradoShines.com/Search](https://ColoradoShines.com/Search) to find in-depth information about each program. In the search results, click "View Details" and scroll down to see inspection reports and other key program information.

### GET INVOLVED!

Now that your child is enrolled, what's next? You are your child's first and most important teacher! Play, read, sing and talk with your child every day. Make sure you talk to your child's provider regularly about how your child is doing at home and in child care.

Find more tips at [EarlyLearningCO.org](https://EarlyLearningCO.org).



# COLORADO SHINES CHILD CARE WORKSHEET

Use this checklist when you visit programs as a way to make sure you find the best child care to meet your family's needs. Print additional checklists at [ColoradoShines.com](http://ColoradoShines.com).

Name of Program: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Visit: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Is your program licensed by the State of Colorado?
2. What are your hours? Are your hours flexible?
3. What days are you closed for holidays or staff training?
4. What is the age range of the children in the program?
5. What is the teacher-to-child ratio?
6. What is a typical day like for my child?  
What is the schedule of activities?
7. What are your values when caring for children?
8. What training have you and your staff had?
9. Can I have a list of current parents to contact for their opinion on your program?
10. What do you do when a medical emergency occurs?
11. What kind of daily communication do you provide?
12. How can I participate in the program?

## CHECKLIST OF THINGS TO LOOK FOR:

### Health and Safety

- Licensed and in good standing with the State.
- Equipment is clean and in good repair.
- Electrical outlets are covered. Emergency route and emergency numbers are posted.
- Doors are locked and visitors must sign in.
- All toys are clean and in good condition.
- The playground has safe surfaces, is fenced and has both sun and shade.

### Daily Activities

- Nutritious meals and snacks are provided.
- Nap and story time are built into the day.
- Puzzles, blocks, music and make-believe materials are available.
- Children have time to choose their own activities.
- Adults encourage independence and help children learn new skills.
- Activities are varied and include both outdoor playtime and indoor quiet time.
- A daily schedule is posted.

### Environment Basics

- Each child has a safe place to sleep, a place to store belongings, and the space is warm and inviting.
- The children are happy and involved with staff and with other children.
- The furniture is child-sized and the materials are at the children's level.
- Materials are age-appropriate and there are enough supplies for children to play alone or to share.
- Different cultures and traditions are seen in the classroom.

### Teacher/Child Interactions

- There is shared respect between teachers and children.
- Teachers are at children's eye level when talking with them.
- Teachers listen closely to each child and use positive language when talking with them.
- Children are asked questions and not just given directions.
- The teacher cares for children who are upset.
- I am comfortable that my child's culture and traditions will be welcomed.