

Are you confused by child care?

Child care is an important part of being a parent, but it doesn't have to be confusing. Trust Pollywog to help you make sense of it all!

Currently, all child care providers are operating under Emergency Child Care (ECC) but the state regulations for licensing still apply. Read on for more information on these regulations, types of child care and preschool, and help paying the bill.

Regulated child care is divided into two types - licensed providers and license-exempt providers.

There are three kinds of **licensed child care providers**, and each must have regular inspections for health and safety, comply with regular background checks, and have ongoing training. These are:

1. **Registered Family Child Care** - home-based child care programs, with up to 10 children;

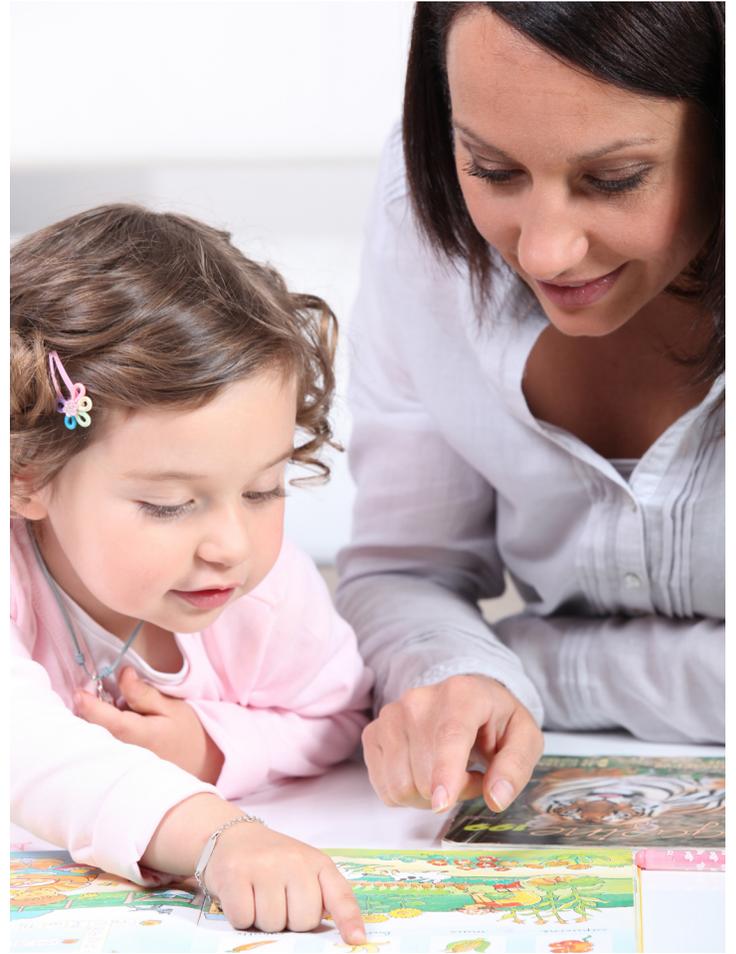
2. **Certified Family Child Care** - also home-based, with up to 16 children, and a more in-depth inspection process;

3. **Certified Child Care Center** - located in a facility rather than a home, with the number of children allowed based upon the size of the facility, and must have additional safety inspections.

There are two kinds of **license-exempt child care providers**, which means that they are regulated but not to the same extent as the first three types.

1. **Regulated Subsidy Provider** - a child care provider who is not licensed but has met the DHS requirements so that they can accept payment from DHS through [Employment Related Day Care](#) (ERDC), sometimes a family member or a friend.

2. **Recorded Programs** - offer primarily educational or development activities, like preschool, for children over 3 years old, and complete background checks on staff.



Some parents consider family members, friends, or neighbors as child care providers. This type of provider is usually known by the family and might not be licensed or regulated. The advantages to choosing licensed or regulated care include health and safety inspections, background checks, and regular training to understand child development.

The ELD's [Child Care Safety Portal](#) is an important tool for parents to check out licensed providers. And [Family Connections](#) provides an excellent guide for [Choosing Good Child Care](#).

Oregon also has its own child care rating system called [Spark](#), and their website has info for parents. Finally, find answers to child care questions at [Child Care Aware](#), a nation-wide organization working to increase the quality and availability of child care.

The Importance of Preschool

High quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) includes child care and preschool/pre-kindergarten. ECE offers activities that promote healthy social, emotional and cognitive growth for young children. Child care and preschool are often confused, and while they can be from the same provider, let's look at the differences.

Child care is open year round and usually serves a group of mixed aged children for extended hours to cover family's work schedules. Child care may take place in a home based environment or in a separate building known as a child care center.

Preschools offer part day, part week programs aimed specifically at meeting the developmental needs of 3 to 5 year olds. Preschools often operate on a school-year calendar, and may follow a specific philosophy like Waldorf or Montessori.

These are very generalized differences, and not every child care provider or preschool will fit into one or the other category. Check out several of these options to see what works for your family.

- **Co-Op Preschools**: parent/child programs like Live and Learn with Your Preschooler;
- **Early Head Start and Head Start**: contact [Kids & Co.](#) in Linn/Benton Counties and [CSC](#) in Lincoln County for these high-quality ECE programs for lower-income families;
- **Relief Nursery**: provides therapeutic classrooms in all three counties;
- **Private preschools**: operated by churches, non-profits, and individuals.
- **Home-based child care**: can serve three to ten children in the provider's home;
- **Child care centers**: operate in a variety of settings, usually serving larger groups separated by age.

Help to Pay for Quality Care

The cost of early childhood education can make preschool options feel out of reach to some families.

Fortunately, [Oregon's Early Learning Division](#) and our local [Early Learning Hub](#) have been working to make quality early childhood education available to as many families as possible.

Thanks to funding bills like the Student Success Act and programs like Preschool Promise, many ECE and child care providers have been able to add more fully-funded classroom spaces. Eligibility is based on family income.

Another option to help pay for child care or early childhood education is Employment-related Day Care (ERDC). ERDC is a program that helps low-income families pay for child care while the parents are working.

Apply for ERDC through DHS, either on their website or in person at a local office. Eligibility has been expanded recently due to COVID-19; [check here](#) to see if your family qualifies.

Help for Parents

[Pollywog Family](#) is here to help parents with all questions about parenting.

[Family Connections](#) is the Child Care Resource & Referral agency for Linn/Benton/Lincoln and is the place to go for tips, advice, and referrals.

[2-1-1](#) is a website and a phone resource service for all kinds of needs, including finding and paying for ECE and child care.

[Oregon's Early Learning Division](#) has steps to follow and lets parents look up licenses and other provider information.

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