



Child Care



For Information on:

See Question Number:

Child Care: What to Look for	Introduction
Child Care Programs	1
Before- and After-School	3
Second Shift Care	3
Weekend Care	3
Drop-In Care	3
Children With Disabilities	2
Child Care Subsidies	4
Head Start	4
Employer-Supported	4
Child & Dependent Care Credit	4
Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)	4
Care for Sick Children	5
In-Home Care	5
Respite Care	6
Resource List	Following the Q&A



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The resource section at the end of this chapter gives you the locations, phone numbers, and/or Web sites of agencies where you can find help. For access to computers and assistance in reaching the information available on Web sites, contact your local public libraries, senior centers, community centers, or family resource centers.



Many grandparents today are still in the workforce. When a grandchild comes to live with them, one of their first concerns is: “Who will take care of the child?” Fortunately, a number of child care options are available, but finding the right care for your grandchild is not always easy. Here are some general steps to follow in selecting “grandchild care.”

- Allow plenty of time to make phone calls, to check for openings at programs, and to make appointments with potential providers (one week minimum).
- Try to interview at least three different providers so you can make the best decision about your grandchild’s care. Spend time in each center or home. If the provider does not offer you a checklist to help you see if the necessary steps for safety and quality have been taken, ask for a checklist from the Wisconsin Child Care Information Center at 1-800-362-7353 or your local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency. Information about the CCR&R is listed after these steps and at the end of this chapter.
- Look for programs where the groups of children are kept small. Ask the provider how many children would be in the same group as your grandchild. Ask if the center or home follows licensing guidelines (e.g., no more than four infants per teacher in a child care center).
- Choose providers who have had child care training, who seem to know what they are doing, and who show warmth and caring toward children. Ask for specific information, such as how much training in child care the provider has taken.
- Look for providers who seem to understand your needs as a grandparent. You might want to ask if the center or home will accept your grandchild on a part-time basis or if extra hours can be arranged when you need time for yourself, such as for a doctor’s appointment or time to relax.
- Look for programs that focus on play as the main activity and ones where children have many choices. Toys should encourage make-believe play and

creativity and be suitable for the age of the children. The size of tables and chairs should be appropriate to the child's age. The provider should guide children's behavior in a positive way.

- Ask to see the parent policies of the program so that you understand the policies on fees, refunds, child guidance, health issues, and other parts of the program. Look for child care homes or centers that are safe and healthy and serve nutritious food.
- Keep in mind that *you* are the one who is in the best position to judge what is best for your grandchild, and *you* are the best person to decide where your grandchild will feel most comfortable and safe.

Wisconsin grandparents are fortunate to have the Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network. This is a statewide organization made up of 17 community-based CCR&R agencies committed to building a high-quality child care system for everyone. Local CCR&Rs offer child care referrals and a number of other services to parents of all income levels. As your first step in the search for quality child care, check the Network's Web site: www.wisconsinccrr.org or call the Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral Network at 1-888-713-KIDS (5437), and you will be connected automatically to the CCR&R serving your area.

The Wisconsin Child Care Information Center (CCIC) also offers help for child care providers and information for families. The CCIC provides brochures, fact sheets, videos and book-lending services, and it offers free referrals to help grandparents learn about agencies concerned with child care in their area of the state. Check the CCIC Web site www.dpi.state.wi.us/ccic or call the Wisconsin Child Care Information Center at 1-800-362-7353.

In Wisconsin, the state Department of Health and Family Services regulates licensed child care programs. Anyone interested in finding out about licensing regulations for specific child care programs should contact the nearest Division of Children and Family Services Field Office.

Southeastern Office
Waukesha (414) 521-5100

Northern Office
Rhineland (715) 365-2500

Southern Office
Madison (608) 243-2400

Western Office
Eau Claire (715) 836-2157

Northeastern Office
Green Bay (920) 448-5312

1. What different types of child care programs are available?

Child care centers. Programs offering child care, education, supervision, and guidance for nine or more children in group settings must be licensed (either full-day or part-day). When looking for good child care, ask your local CCR&R agency for names of centers that meet your specific needs. Especially ask about those that are nationally accredited (those that meet more than the basic requirements).

Family child care homes. These programs provide care, education, supervision, and guidance in private homes. They are required by law to obtain a license if a provider cares for four or more children (a maximum of eight, including her own children) under the age of seven. If providers are caring *only* for their own children, grandchildren, nieces or nephews, they do not need to be licensed. Another type of family child care is a *certified* or *provisionally certified* family child care home. These providers offer care for fewer than fewer children (a maximum of three to six children, including their own). They do not have to meet the same training requirements or other requirements of licensed care. They are regulated by counties or private agencies using state standards.

In-home care. This type of care involves hiring someone to come into your home to care for your children. It is very convenient, but it is one of the most expensive forms of child care. Since you are the employer, you must pay minimum wage and contribute to the employee's taxes. There are no state licensing regulations that apply to in-home care. Such caregivers for children are sometimes called "nannies." You can locate "Nannies" in the Yellow Pages of your phone book. Some families also contact local colleges or universities to hire student help to do in-home care. Contact the Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral Network (1-888-713-KIDS [5437]) and/or talk to your local CCR&R to discuss the possibility of finding in-home caregivers in your area.

Preschool care. Group child care centers include preschools or nursery schools that offer educational, social, and developmental activities for children from three to five years of age. These programs usually run for 2 1/2 to 4 hours a day, two to five days a week. However, most families need more hours of child care to fit their work schedules than preschools may offer. Many full-day child care centers also offer preschool-type programs. For more information about part-day programs, call The Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral Network (1-888-713-KIDS [5437]) and/or talk to your local CCR&R.

School-age child care. Most families know that "going to school" doesn't mean the end of a need for child care. Children from ages five to nine often need care and supervision before or after school—and certainly on school holidays. In fact, some children up to the age of twelve need such care, depending on their developmental needs and the neighborhoods they live in. Community organizations often offer school-age child care, as part of full-day group center services or special school-age care agencies. School-age programs will be listed with your local CCR&R.

2. What if my grandchild has a disability that requires special care? How do child care providers deal with children with disabilities?

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 states that child care providers must serve children with disabilities unless it would place an undue burden on their program or seriously change the nature of the program. Children with HIV are considered as having a disability and not an infectious disease. Many child care providers readily accept children with special needs and find that some of the medical conditions are not that difficult to include in their regular programs. Explaining your grandchild's special needs to the provider and offering to work with the child care program may make it easier for the provider to care for your grandchild. If your grandchild has a serious medical or emotional problem, it might be best to contact some of the agencies below for further help in locating child care. To explore disability-related resources, visit the Family Village Web site at www.familyvillage.wisc.edu/index.html or call one of the following:

Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral Network 1-888-713-5437 (KIDS)

Wisconsin First Step (for children age six and under with special needs) 1-800-642-STEP

Easter Seals at 1-888-276-4747. Visit their Web site at http://wi.easterseals.com/site/PageServer?pagename=WIMA_homepage

3. What if I work or need care for my grandchild at times other than “9 to 5”? What sorts of programs are available before and after school, after 5 p.m., or on weekends?

Before- and after-school care. Some of the agencies that sponsor school-age programs (such as churches, YMCAs, school districts, and youth clubs) may or may not be open during school holidays, snow days, or the summer months. This type of child care is also available in many child care centers and family child care homes. Contact the Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral Network at 1-888-713-KIDS (5437) and/or talk to your local CCR&R.

Second shift care. This type of care can be hard to find. However, some child care centers and family child care homes do offer evening and overnight care. For more information, call the Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral Network at 1-888-713-KIDS (5437).

Weekend care. This type of care may be available in some family child care homes and child care centers. To find names of providers in your area who may be able to care for your grandchild on weekends, call the Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral Network.

Drop-in care. Sometimes grandparents need to go to the doctor or somewhere they cannot take their grandchild. If family or friends cannot watch the child, some child care centers and family child care providers may offer care for a short time or once in a while if they have the room. There are some programs set up for just this kind of care, often called “drop-in” care or “mother’s day out.” Contact the Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral Network or your local CCR&R.

4. What if I cannot afford child care, preschool, or school-age services for my grandchild?

Child care subsidy. Low-income families may qualify for Wisconsin Shares, a program that helps pay for child care for families whose income level and family size qualify for services. You may qualify for Wisconsin Shares even if you do not participate in Wisconsin Works (W-2). Call the Wisconsin Child Care Resource and Referral Network (1-888-713-KIDS [5437]), your local Wisconsin Job Center, W-2 agency, or tribal agency for more information or to find out if you qualify for a child care subsidy. In addition, some counties may offer child care subsidies through the Kinship Care program.

Head Start. This is a federally supported program for children ages three to five years who are from low-income families. Some Head Start programs offer infant and toddler care, as well. Some sites offer full-day care for those families who work and other sites offer care for only part of the day. For more information, contact the Wisconsin Head Start Association (1-608-265-9422) or your local CCR&R agency (1-888-713-KIDS [5437]) and ask for a list of Head Start sites in your area. The resource list at the end of this chapter may contain the contact number in your area for Head Start. When you contact Head Start, ask about the eligibility cut off for family income. For more information about the Head Start program, see the Education Chapter in this resource guide.

Employer-supported child care. Some companies offer dependent care (including child care) as part of their Flexible Benefit Plan. This means that a portion of your salary can be set aside as pre-tax dollars by your employer and reimbursed to you as your dependent care expenses occur. Ask the human resources department at your workplace if a tax-free child care benefit is available to you as a salary reduction plan. However, this benefit is a “use it or lose it” benefit, meaning you can’t just take home any of that money if you don’t use it to pay for child care. In addition, some employers offer on- or near-site child care centers for employees, sometimes at a lower cost to their employees than to the community.

Child and Dependent Care Credit. This type of Internal Revenue Services (IRS) credit may be a possibility if you have child care expenses for one or more children under age 13 who live with you. Families of all income levels are eligible. The higher your child care expenses and the lower the amount of your income, the larger your credit. You will need to complete a Form 2441 when you file your taxes. For more information, call the Internal Revenue Service at 1-800-829-1040 and ask for publication #503. You also may want to contact a certified public accountant for details.

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) can be claimed by a qualifying taxpayer who earns less than a set amount in any given year. Grandparents may claim this credit when grandchildren live with them. It may be taken in advance by filing a W-5 form. For more information, call the Internal Revenue Service at 1-800-829-3676 and ask for publication #596. You also could contact a certified public accountant.

5. What if my grandchild becomes ill? Is child care available for sick children in a center or in my home?

Care for sick children. Children who are mildly ill or are recovering from a long illness or accident may receive care in a special program set up to meet their needs. These programs are licensed by the State of Wisconsin, and may only accept children who are mildly ill. Children with highly contagious conditions, such as chicken pox or diarrhea, are not permitted in a licensed group setting. In addition, some group centers or family child care homes in the community have staff who are trained to care for mildly ill children. However, children who are ill generally are not allowed to attend licensed programs.

In-home care for sick children. Some agencies may send health care staff into your home to care for a mildly ill child if you cannot take the time off from work to be there. Be sure to check how much this service costs before hiring someone to come in, since this is one of the most expensive forms of child care. Again, your local Child Care Resource and Referral agency may help answer questions about care for sick children.

6. Is there any place my grandchildren can stay temporarily if I have a personal crisis or if I need a break in caring for my grandchild?

For grandparents who have a grandchild with a special need, it may be necessary to find child care for a period of several days or over a weekend. This type of care is sometimes known as “respite care.” Some respite programs are available to parents and grandparents when a family is facing a difficult short-term problem or when “time out” from parental responsibilities can be of help. Some of the reasons for requesting these services are medical emergencies such as hospitalization, financial difficulties, or housing problems such as eviction. It is important for you to know when you need to have a break in order to do your best in caring for your grandchild. For information about a respite center in your community, contact the Respite Care Association of Wisconsin at 1-888-260-8207 or check their Web site: www.respitecarewi.org Also, check with your local county or tribal aging unit because there may be resources through the National Family Caregiver Support Program to provide short-term respite.



The information in this chapter has been adapted for use in Wisconsin from the state of Delaware's *Grandparents/Relatives Raising and Nurturing Dependent Children Resource Guide* by Mary Roach, Child Development Specialist, UW-Extension Family Living Programs, with additional contributions from Beth Swedeen, Parent Facilitator for the Early Intervention Project at the Waisman Center; Gay Eastman, Early Childhood Education and Child Development Specialist, UW-Extension Family Living Programs; and Mary Brintnall-Peterson, Program Specialist in Aging, UW-Extension Family Living Programs.

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This chapter is one of eight chapters included in the *Grandparents/Relatives Raising And Nurturing Dependent Children (GRAND) Resource Guide*. Other topics addressed in the resource guide include Education, Legal, Housing, Financial Assistance, Counseling, Parenting, and Health issues. They can be found on the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Web site at: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/grandparent/grand.pdf>

The University of Wisconsin-Extension presents the information in the *Grandparents/Relative Raising And Nurturing Grandchildren (GRAND) Resource Guide* as a service to those who are raising grandchildren or other kin or to those who are working with them. Although every effort has been made to ensure accuracy and reliability, UW-Extension and contributors to this resource guide make no warranty or guarantee concerning the accuracy or reliability of the content in the resource guide.



