

*Ministère
de la Famille, des Aînés
et de la Condition féminine*



Finding

EDUCATIONAL CHILDCARE
FOR YOUR CHILD

Québec 

Production:
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The last few years in Québec have seen a phenomenal expansion of the childcare network.

While recognizing that parents are primarily responsible for the care of their child, the Government of Québec acknowledges the vital role educational childcare services play as a support measure.

Childcare services are offered by service providers, including childcare centres, day care centres and home childcare providers. These providers are recognized legally if they offer childcare to more than six children: they are then governed according to law, and must hold a permit issued by the Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine or be recognized as home childcare providers by a coordinating office.

Most regulated services provide spaces at the reduced contribution (\$7 a day) and receive government grants to enable them to do so: parents have access to a network of 200,000 spaces at \$7 a day. Other regulated services are not subsidized and set their own fees for parents.

Subsidized childcare services are offered to young children in priority, from birth to their entry into kindergarten. School-age children may, under certain conditions, attend childcare and be eligible for a space at the reduced contribution.

Also, parents benefiting from the Employment Assistance Program are entitled to free ongoing educational childcare services for children under five for a maximum of two-and-a-half days or five half-days per week.

Service providers implement an educational program designed to stimulate children's overall harmonious development, in other words, the full development of their emotional, physical, motor, social or moral, intellectual and linguistic dimensions.

All regulated establishments provide receipts for day care fees for tax credit purposes. However, parents are not entitled to the provincial credit if their children occupy a space at the reduced contribution.



A FEW DEFINITIONS

CHILDCARE CENTRE

A childcare centre is either a non-profit organization whose board of directors is at least two-thirds composed of parent users, or a cooperative. In its facilities it offers spaces at the reduced contribution (\$7 a day).

DAY CARE CENTRE

A day care centre is generally a for-profit organization that furnishes childcare in a facility. It is obligated to form a parents' committee. Most day care centres, having signed an agreement with the Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine, offer spaces at the reduced contribution (\$7 a day).

HOME CHILDCARE

Home childcare is a remunerated service provided by a person in a private residence. If providers are not recognized by a coordinating office, they may not receive more than six children. When they are recognized, they provide educational childcare to a maximum of six children, of whom no more than two may be younger than 18 months. If another adult assists them, they may receive from seven to nine children (of whom no more than four may be younger than 18 months).

HOME CHILDCARE COORDINATING OFFICE

Located in every region of Québec, the 165 accredited coordinating offices are responsible, in a determined territory, for coordinating educational childcare services offered by home childcare providers, monitoring application of the regulatory standards, and maintaining an information service for parents.

1. LOOKING FOR A CHILDCARE ESTABLISHMENT

Before selecting a childcare establishment, you must determine your needs and those of your child. What are your preferences? Are you looking for a family environment or a collectively run organization? Your educational values may also influence your choice. You should meet the staff of a childcare service you're interested in and visit the premises.

It's also important to check whether the childcare service offers spaces at the reduced contribution.

A childcare establishment that receives government grants entitles you to:

- a space at the reduced contribution of \$7 a day;
- educational childcare service for a continuous period up to a maximum of 10 hours per day, 20 days per four-week* period and 261 days per year;
- a meal and snacks, if the child is in the childcare service at the time when they are scheduled to be served;
- all materials used as part of the childcare service.

* You can obtain more than 20 days of childcare per four-week period if you can prove it is justified by seasonal work or your work or school schedule. However, you are entitled to the same maximum days of childcare per year: 261.



A subsidized educational childcare service can ask you to pay additional fees in the following circumstances only:

- an outing organized as part of an educational activity in which your child takes part for which the provider incurs additional expenses (e.g., a trip to the zoo or apple orchard);
- personal hygiene items for your child (for example, diapers or solar cream);
- an additional meal.

You are free to accept or refuse the proposed services. If you refuse, your child must still receive a complete educational program.

You can consult the Regulation respecting reduced contributions on the Ministère's website.

To ensure a wide choice, it is best to start looking ahead of time, even as much as a year in advance. If you put your child on a waiting list, it is more likely that she/he will be accepted when the time comes.

You can also check the childcare locator on the Ministère's website (www.mfacf.gouv.qc.ca). This tool will help you locate the coordinating office in your territory and the childcare and day care centres located close to your home or workplace. Also very useful, if you are searching for home childcare, is the centralized information held by the coordinating office in your territory.

For more information, contact the Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine.

2. PHONING

The next step is to obtain information by phone concerning a childcare establishment:

- Permit issued by the Ministère de la Famille, des Aînés et de la Condition féminine yes no

The childcare centre or day care centre must post it. Therefore, you should be able to see it when you visit.

- Notice of recognition of a person as a home childcare provider yes no

A recognized provider must have a notice of recognition from a home childcare coordinating office.

- Availability of spaces yes no

- Existence of a waiting list yes no

- Admission conditions yes no

- Possibility of part-time attendance when necessary yes no

- Possibility of obtaining a space at the reduced contribution yes no

- Opening hours
-

- Times during the year when the establishment is closed
-

- Total number of children cared for
-

- In a childcare or day care centre, the number of children in your child's age group
-

Regulations stipulate that, in a childcare or day care centre, a staff member may not care for more than:

- *5 children younger than 18 months;*
- *8 children between the ages of 18 months and 4 years;*
- *10 children between the ages of 4 and 5 years on September 30;*
- *20 children aged 5 or older on September 30.*

- In a home childcare operation, the ages of the children cared for
-

- Meals and snacks offered (sample menu, food prepared on site or elsewhere, etc.)
-

- Items to be supplied (change of clothes, bottles, diapers, etc.)
-

- Childcare fees¹
-

- Other expenses, if applicable²
-

- Payment procedure
-

- In a home childcare, nature of the home (located in a house or apartment building; access to a yard or pool; presence of animals, etc.)
-

If you have no trouble obtaining all the information you ask for and if the answers meet your expectations and needs, make an appointment to visit. A visit will give you a good idea of the premises, the adults' attitude when dealing with the children, activities offered, and health and safety measures.

1. See the box on page 4.
2. See the box on page 5.

3. VISIT

When you visit, you should be able to meet with the person or people who will be responsible for your child and to find out:

- whether the permit is posted (in the case of a childcare centre or day care centre);
- what kind of environment your child will be living in;
- the activities offered;
- how your child's health and safety will be protected.

Rate each of the points observed, using, for example:

- the letter A for very good;
- B for fair;
- C for unacceptable;
- N if you did not obtain the information.

Then you will be able to compare the establishments you visit and select the one that suits you best.

Childcare services are subject to the Educational Childcare Regulation, which can be found on the Ministère's website.

3.1 ENVIRONMENT

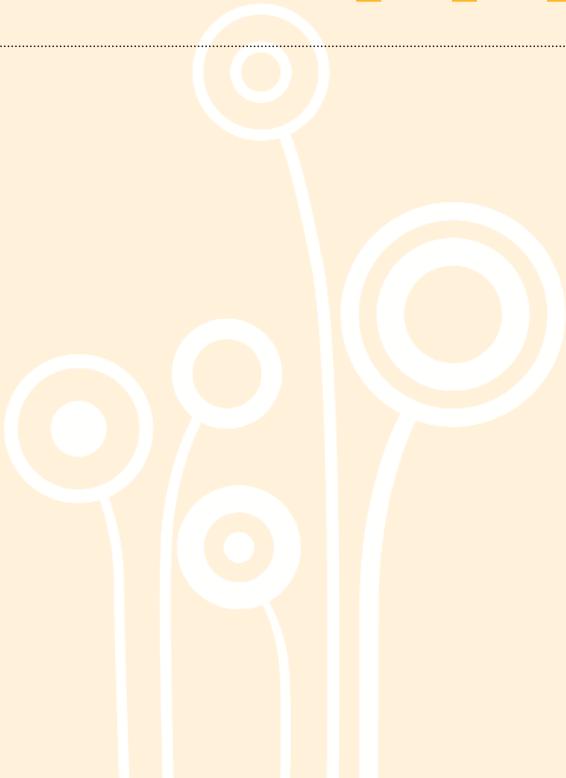
The environment in which your child may sometimes spend nearly 10 hours a day is a very important consideration when selecting childcare. The environment affects children's behaviour and their development. Poorly organized premises may mean unnecessary constraints and may be unsafe and offer little stimulation.

Assess the quality of the physical environment by looking for the following features:

Establ. n° 1	Establ. n° 2	Establ. n° 3
-----------------	-----------------	-----------------

- Childcare areas are clean, well lit and welcoming.
But look out for excessive order and cleanliness, which could indicate too much control over the children's activities. Some establishments give little material to the children so that everything is in order, but a certain amount of untidiness is normal when children are playing.
- There is enough room for the children to engage in different activities.
- If the establishment accepts infants, the space is organized to comply with their special needs.
The furniture should help them move around, stand up or hold on when walking. Furthermore, it is advisable for very young infants to have a protected area away from older children who are more mobile.

- ▼ Stimulating, amusing images such as drawings, photographs or illustrations are hung on the walls at the children's eye level.
 - ▼ There are different kinds of age-appropriate toys in sufficient quantity.
 - ▼ Games, toys and children's books are spaced where the children can reach them.
 - ▼ The noise level is reasonable and normal, considering the children's activities.
Excessive noise may indicate a lack of control, while silence may mean too much control.
 - ▼ A yard next to the establishment or a green space nearby enables the children to play safely outdoors every day.
 - ▼ Other aspect:
-



3.2 INTERACTION BETWEEN ADULTS AND CHILDREN

The adults who work with the children play a critical role in their development. In a quality childcare establishment, every individual in charge of the children must have certain personal qualities and skills.

Sensitivity, patience, tolerance, curiosity and energy are the basic qualities of a good educator. Thanks to these qualities, she/he can foster the emotional, social, moral, intellectual, language, physical and motor development of the children, while promoting their independence. Educators must be able to encourage a child's ability to think, question and communicate.

They must also be able to communicate easily with the parents to discuss the child's progress or problems. These exchanges allow for the harmonious blending of the childcare establishment's educational approaches and activities with those of the parents.

When you visit an establishment, take the opportunity to observe the person who will care for your child and check these points:

	Establ. n° 1	Establ. n° 2	Establ. n° 3
➤ This person uses a natural, friendly, respectful tone of voice with the children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ She/he uses words that children can understand but does not use baby talk.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ The children smile and look cheerful in her/his presence.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Generally she/he seems likeable, in good health and you sense you can trust her/him.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Other aspect:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.3 TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

The training and experience of the person who will care for your child are factors influencing the quality of her/his work.

In the case of regulated childcare establishments, there are requirements concerning the training of individuals working with the children.

In childcare centres, at least two out of three childcare staff members must have a college or university education in child studies.

In day care centres, at least one member of the childcare staff must have a college or university education in child studies. After September 1, 2011, two childcare staff members out of three will be required to have these qualifications.

In a home environment, the home childcare provider must have some training in child development, safety, health, nutrition and the educational program.

Furthermore, they must hold lifesaving and first-aid certificates.

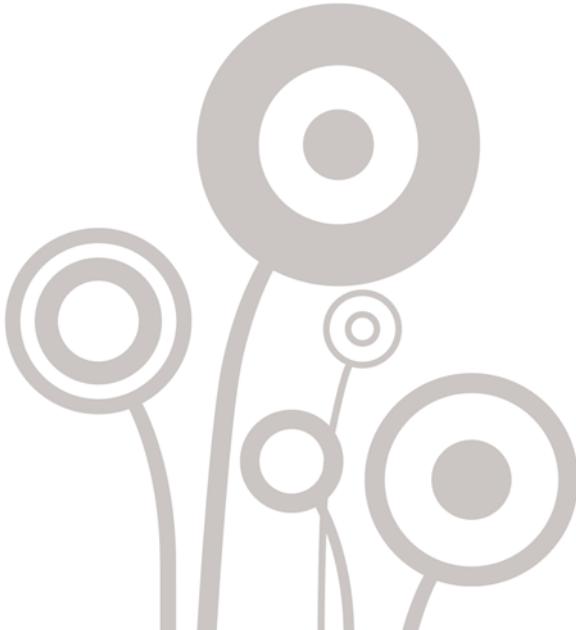
Last, any adult liable to be in close or distant contact with the children—whether a member of management, educator, support staff member, home childcare provider or adult member of the provider's family—must be subjected to a background check by the police.

Establ. nº 1	Establ. nº 2	Establ. nº 3
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- The training and experience of the people who will be responsible for your child are satisfactory.

If it is a home childcare, you may also want to check the following points:

- Does this person balance her/his house-keeping chores and the care of the children without difficulty.
- Whether you feel you can trust the other adults in contact with the children.
- Whether she/he can provide letters of reference or information on how to get in touch with parents who have used the service.
- Other aspect:



3.4 ACTIVITIES

The following points will help you to judge the quality of the activities offered.

Establ. n° 1	Establ. n° 2	Establ. n° 3
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- The activities offered are varied.

Physical activities, fine motor activities (modelling clay, cutting, etc.), nursery rhymes, books, puppets, stories, board games (puzzles, card games, etc.), blocks, role playing (storekeeper, fire fighter, etc.), dressing up, singing, dancing, painting.

- Outside games are scheduled every day, winter and summer, unless the weather is too bad.

The state of the outdoor area can give you an idea of how often activities are held outdoors: does the grass look too manicured? Is the snow full of footprints?

- Children are free to take part in group activities.

- Television is used only for educational purposes.

- Other:
-

3.5 HEALTH AND SAFETY

Childcare establishments must ensure the children's health and safety everywhere and at all times. Those in charge should, therefore, take special measures that should be explained to you.

The layout of all childcare facilities must comply closely with safety regulations. Outdoor play equipment and areas must also conform with specific standards.

Whether it be staff, materials, meal menus or hygiene, nothing must be left to chance when it comes to ensuring youngsters' protection and well-being.

	Establ. n° 1	Establ. n° 2	Establ. n° 3
➤ The temperature is comfortable and it is not too warm in the areas where the children are active.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Toilets and sinks are clean and easily accessible to the children.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ The area provided for changing diapers is safe and located near a sink.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Infants' cribs are fairly new and in good condition.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ The kitchen facilities make it possible to prepare, serve and keep food in compliance with basic rules of hygiene.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Menus are varied and well balanced.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ There is a fire extinguisher near the kitchen stove, and there are smoke detectors. An evacuation plan exists in the event of an emergency.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
➤ Medications, cleaning products and other hazardous products are kept out of the children's reach or under lock and key.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- Material, equipment and furniture are in good condition, safe and adapted to the children's size.
 - Climbing structures, swings, slides and other such equipment are safe.
 - Parents are allowed access to the premises at any time during opening hours.
 - Other aspect:
-



4. YOUR CHILD'S ADJUSTMENT TO DAY CARE

Once you have made your choice and registration is completed, you need to prepare your child for day care. You will make it easier for her/him to adapt to this new lifestyle if you proceed as follows:

- Describe the space, the people and the day-to-day life at the childcare establishment before the first day.
- If possible, take your child for an informal visit.
- If possible, take a step-by-step, gradual approach to the new environment: a few hours a day at the beginning, then a little longer on the following days.
- During the first few days, spend a few minutes with the child on the premises before you leave and when you return to pick her/him up.
- To reassure the child, tell her/him when you will be back.
- If possible, pick up the child early for the first few days.

It is better to avoid other major changes during this period, such as moving the child from a crib to a bed, weaning, introducing new foods, or toilet training. The child needs stability to facilitate her/his adaptation to day care.

Listen carefully to your child for cues about her/his perception of the services she/he is receiving.

Watch the child's behaviour at home. If she/he becomes sad, apathetic, angry, loses her/his appetite, has trouble sleeping, throws tantrums, becomes aggressive because of the change, tell the people responsible for your child's care. They will take this into account and pay special attention to your child.

Make sure that the conditions in the agreement you signed when you registered your child are met, for example, number of children in the group, meals and activities. You must also be able to have access to the childcare establishment at all times in order to check what kind of care is in fact given to your child and the attitude of the people who take care of her/him.

Are you allowed to enter the childcare area to take your child to the person who is responsible for her/him? Are you asked instead to leave her/him at the entrance with a specific person under the pretext of safety or lack of parking?

Are you allowed to speak freely with the person in charge of your child? Or are you told that your presence interferes with activities or disturbs the children?

Selecting the childcare establishment best suited to your child requires patience and quite a few steps. However, it is well worth the effort because you will ensure well-being and safety for your child and peace of mind for yourself.

5. CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES ARE ENTITLED TO CHILDCARE TOO

Integrating a child with a disability into a childcare establishment gives her/him a chance to be with peers and develop through daily activities. It also helps her/him to become increasingly independent, just like other children.

The Ministère provides additional financial assistance to childcare establishments to allow them to receive children with a disability. Usually, this involves adapting the premises, equipment and activities to promote each child's participation.

The role of the parents and childcare staff is crucial to the success of this process. The support of health and social service professionals is another success factor.

6. TOOLS FOR PARENTS

The Ministère's website offers plenty of useful information for parents.

The **Guide to Government Programs and Services for Families and Children** contains over 80 information cards on subjects such as financial assistance for families, leave for family occasions, international adoption, and much more. It is an indispensable tool for families looking to discover all the resources offered by the Government of Québec.

The **Répertoire des activités extérieures** (Directory of Outdoor Activities, French only) contains 65 cards with loads of ideas to encourage your youngsters to play outside. Each game includes variations and adaptations to adapt to each child's pace of development and needs.

À nous de jouer (French only) is a guide on behaviour problems in young children offering suggestions for how to bring about behaviour changes. You will learn about how to create a positive environment that will encourage the acquisition of acceptable behaviours.

Log on to www.mfacf.gouv.qc.ca—you'll find it's worth it!



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