

Frequently asked questions



Looking for quality early childhood education and care can make you feel uncertain about what questions to ask and how to identify the important features of a quality service.

We all need help in caring for our children at different times in our lives. For example, you might need full-time or part-time care for your children while you work or study. Or you might need an occasional few hours for appointments, recreational activities or to have time to yourself.

Here are some important questions to consider when making sure a service meets your family's needs.

What should services offer?

A quality early childhood education and care service should offer children:

- nurturing and enjoyable adult company
- opportunities to play with other children
- time to follow their interests, play, explore and learn
- times and places to be quiet, relax, rest or be alone
- freedom and support to express feelings appropriately, for example, to be happy, irritated, satisfied, frustrated, energetic or tired
- clear and reasonable expectations of behaviour that is respectful of others.

How will I choose the right services for my child?

Visit several services with your child and speak with the staff or carer before making a decision. Ask for information about the service's practices and policies. By comparing information given by each service and seeing what they look like, you can choose a service that best meets the needs of your family.

What will my child do at the service?

Even if your child is in care for just a couple of hours, they need a variety of indoor and outdoor play experiences to interest and challenge them. Early childhood education and care staff are required to plan activities and routines that suit the age and individual interests of children in their care. Make sure you discuss your child's individual needs with the staff.

How will I know if the programs, activities and experiences are sensitive to my child's cultural and linguistic background?

All programs, activities and experiences should be planned and provided in a way that reflects the multicultural nature of the community and caters for the children's diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Talk with staff about how they will communicate with your child. Ask staff how they will support your child's involvement in activities and encourage opportunities to make friends.

If you need help reading or speaking English, ask if anyone at the service speaks your language, or ask to use the Translating and Interpreting Service, TIS National, on 131 450.

What if my child has additional support needs?

All services are encouraged to implement practices which include children with disabilities and/or additional support needs. It is important to be clear about your child's particular needs so staff can identify interests and abilities and provide appropriate support to facilitate your child's full inclusion.

Will my child be safe?

Hygiene and safety are important factors in quality early childhood education and care services. Ask staff what arrangements have been made to ensure the environment is safe for children, for example, where cleaning products are stored.

Will food be supplied?

Some services supply food. If so, you need to let staff know if your child has particular dietary requirements. If food is not supplied by the service, you will need to pack food for your child to bring with them.

What if my child becomes unwell?

Children sometimes become unwell while in care so ensure you ask about the service's policy for handling these situations. If your child has a medical or health problem, ask how staff can provide support for your child. If your child is ill or has a contagious condition, you may be asked to keep your child at home.

What are the operating hours?

Each early childhood education and care service is responsible for nominating its operating hours. Ask if a late fee applies as the service may charge an additional fee if you pick up your children after closing time.

What if I can't collect my child on time?

At times when you can't collect your child, you can nominate another adult to do so. At the time of enrolment, you will be asked to identify an alternative person to collect your child in emergency situations. However, in emergencies, you can also contact the director, coordinator or care provider to discuss an alternative arrangement.

What about holidays?

Family holidays: If you take holidays during the year, you could be asked to pay a holding fee for your child's place. **Services closing:** Some services may close for holiday periods each year, so you will need to make plans for this in advance.

School holidays: Some services offer vacation care so ensure you check whether the service you are considering will be open during hours that suit you.

How much does it cost?

Fees can vary significantly depending on the type of service. Before you enrol, be sure to ask about all costs, including those for public holidays, late fees, holidays and when your child is away sick. Some services charge hourly, daily and weekly, and may charge additional fees such as nappy, meal and excursion fees.

You may be eligible for assistance with fees through Child Care Benefit from the Commonwealth Government Family Assistance Office. Call the Family Assistance Office on 13 61 50 to discuss your circumstances and possible entitlements.

How can I participate in the running of the service?

Every family has something to offer to enrich the lives of the children and families in the service and there are several ways you can participate. Many services have management or advisory committees which develop policies and make decisions. So don't be afraid to ask the service how you can be involved.

What if I have concerns?

Staff and carers need to know of any concerns you might have about the service so they can address the issue. If you are concerned about the standard of care, and your approaches to the staff and licensee are not effective, call the Child Care Information Service on 3224 4225.

Further information

Child Care Information Service

This service, provided by the Department of Communities, is free and provides families with up-to-date information about child care services and facilities in their local area. The service will not make recommendations about a particular service.

Child Care Services Search

Visit the department's website to locate child care services in your area.

Other resources

Parent tip sheets and information about licensing requirements and building standards for child care services in Queensland.

Telephone: 3224 4225

Freecall outside Brisbane: 1800 637 711

Calls from mobile phones are charged at applicable rates.

Email: ccis@communities.qld.gov.au

www.communities.qld.gov.au

Other languages

If you need an interpreter, call TIS National on 131 450 and ask to be connected to 13 13 04.

National Relay Service

If you are deaf or have a hearing or speech disability and need help making calls, contact the Department of Communities through the National Relay Service on 13 36 77.



Queensland Government
Department of **Communities**