

Understanding early childhood education and care services



When looking for early childhood education and care services, it is important to understand that services can be licensed or unlicensed.

Licensed early childhood education and care services have standards and guidelines as set out in the *Child Care Act 2002* and the *Child Care Regulation 2003* which they need to follow in providing quality care for children.

Licensing standards in Queensland

In Queensland, licensed early childhood education and care services are required to meet minimum quality standards in areas such as:

- qualifications of staff
- policies and procedures
- number of staff required to care for children
- maximum group sizes
- activities and experiences
- equipment
- health and safety of children
- facilities and space
- information for parents and carers.



For further information about the licensing standards you should refer to the *Child Care Act 2002* (the Act) and the *Child Care Regulation 2003* (the Regulation). Services must have a copy of the Act and the Regulation for you to look at. The legislation is also available from the Department of Communities website at www.communities.qld.gov.au

Types of licensed early childhood education and care services

Licensed early childhood education and care services are either centre based or home based.

Centre based services

Long day care centres provide care and education for children from birth to six years of age depending on the individual service. Services generally operate for at least 10 hours a day from Monday to Friday for a minimum of 48 weeks each year. Some services may offer before and/or after school care for children aged up to 12 years.

Kindergartens generally provide care and education for children from three and a half years to school age. Kindergartens operate for up to six hours on school days during school terms.

Occasional care services offer care and education to children on an occasional basis.

Limited hours care services operate up to 20 hours a week and are licensed to care for a maximum of 30 children.

School age care services offer care for children who are enrolled in and regularly attend school. Generally, services may offer care and education before and/or after school and during school holidays.

Home based care

Family day care is care and education offered in the private homes of registered carers through a family day care scheme. Carers are monitored and supported by the scheme's coordination unit.

While you can expect minimum standards to be met, it is a good idea to investigate a number of services before choosing a service that best meets your needs.

Types of early childhood education and care services not required to be licensed

In-home care is care offered to children in the home of the child. The Commonwealth Government Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs funds in-home care to families who do not have access to standard early childhood education and care services or if the child's needs cannot be met by existing services. For information about in-home care, contact the Commonwealth Government Child Care Access Hotline on 1800 670 305.

Vacation care services are not attached to before and/or after school care services. They operate during school holidays only, and offer a variety of programs from part-day to full-day care, including excursions.

Stand alone care services are regularly offered by a person over 18 years of age in either a home or another place such as a hall or church. There must not be more than six children from birth to 12 years of age (maximum of four under school age). A carer must have public liability insurance.

Adjunct care services provide care on a short-term basis, such as in a shopping centre or gym, for up to three hours while the parent or carer stays on the premises.

Children's activity services include a particular activity such as dance, music or sport.

Playgroups comply with the guidelines of the Playgroup Association of Queensland Incorporated and involve parents, carers and children coming together to play and socialise.

Nannies and babysitters are people who offer care on an individual basis or through a registered agency.

Resort care services are conducted by a hotel or resort to provide child care to children who are short-term guests.

Other requirements for licensed and unlicensed services

Prescribed notices (blue card)

The Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian Act 2000 requires people who operate child care services or people engaged to provide care for young children, to hold a current positive prescribed notice (blue card). Adults (18 years or older), living in a carer's home where care is being provided to children, must also hold a blue card.

This means that all persons working in a licensed or unlicensed service are required to hold a blue card.

Qualification requirements

The qualification requirements for staff in centre based and home based early childhood education and care services are set out in the Child Care Regulation 2003 (section 112–116).

Centre based services

All staff working with children in centre based services (except for unqualified carers in school age care services) are required to hold, or be studying for, an appropriate early childhood or children's services qualification for the position in which they are employed.

Staff working in school age care services as a qualified carer, must hold, or be studying for, a qualification in children's services, or in an approved related area (for example, recreation or primary studies). Staff working in services that were operating before 1 September 2003 have until 1 September 2008 to meet the qualification requirements.



Home based care

A coordinator of a family day care scheme must hold an appropriate early childhood or an approved related area qualification. Coordinators monitor the standards of care being provided by the scheme. They also provide training and support for carers to provide appropriate child care.

All carers are required to participate in professional development through the scheme. While no formal qualifications are required by care providers, many carers are studying courses related to their work.

Stand alone care

No formal qualifications are required.

Licensed capacity requirements

Centre based services

The legislation sets out the maximum number of children that can be cared for in each age group. The maximum capacity of a service appears on the service's licence. A school age care licence may state different licensed capacities for before and after school care and vacation care. The licence must be displayed in a prominent place at the service.

The licensee must also display, at an appropriate place at the service:

- a notice detailing the maximum number of children and the age range for the group
- the number of staff and their work hours for each day
- each staff member's name, qualification and position
- staff rest periods.

The licensee is also required to display information related to the provision of emergency care at the centre.

Home based care

For licensed home based services, legislation clearly sets out the maximum number of children that can be cared for in a carer's home. It also sets out the maximum number of carers and children who may come together for play sessions and the standards for the provision of emergency care.

Providing parents and carers with information

Licensed services must provide parents and carers with other information, including:

- the service's compliance with the licensing requirements of the *Child Care Act 2002* and *Child Care Regulation 2003*
- the contact details for the Department of Communities' Child Care Information Service
- the ages of the children in the group in which the child will receive care
- the name, position and qualifications of each of the service's staff members
- the child's daily routine and a general statement about programs
- current information about groups and staffing at the centre.

The legislation requires services to provide information, and develop and regularly review policies on a number of matters, such as:

- hygiene, safety and emergency evacuation procedures
- injuries, illness and infectious diseases
- delivery and collection of children
- storing and giving medicine to children
- excursions and outings
- staffing
- procedures for dealing with the concerns of parents and carers
- participation of parents and carers, students, volunteers and others participating in the operation of the service.

You have the right to access the service at any time while your child is in care and view records about your child.



Providing services with personal information

Before enrolling your child, services are required to ask for information about your family background, emergency contacts, doctor's details and other details relevant to the care of your child. Sharing this information with your service helps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of your child while in care. It is important you keep your emergency contact details up to date.

Services are required to keep this information confidential and parents and carers must be given access to records about their child.

The benefits of quality early childhood education and care

- You can place your child in care and know he or she is safe and well cared for by people who share an understanding about what is important for your child.
- Your child's development and education will be planned with your involvement.
- You will be supported in caring for your child.
- Your child will have the opportunity to develop skills by playing with others and taking part in activities that build on their abilities and interests.
- You will have opportunities to work, attend appointments or recreational activities or have time to yourself.



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**