

Look for the stars when choosing child care!



**Child Care
Services**

www.okdhs.org

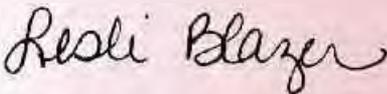
Dear Parents:

Being a parent can be difficult and demanding. If you have made the decision to work outside the home, you may have already experienced the difficulty in finding child care that meets your family's needs. Even with all of the information and resources available, the choice can still be challenging. The Oklahoma Department of Human Services has created this guide to assist you in understanding the criteria of the Reaching for the Stars quality rating and improvement system to help you make the most informed decision.

There is a wealth of research on the impact child care has on a child's life including the potential for classroom success and long-term outcomes into adulthood. The first three years of life are critical to the development of a child. A high quality early childhood experience will help your child be better prepared for success in school and build a solid foundation for the child's life.

You are the first and most important person who will nurture and teach your child. If you depend on someone else to help care for your child, please take the opportunity to choose the care best suited for your child's needs. Take time to ensure that your child's teacher is providing an enriched, safe and happy place to learn and grow. Visit often, look at the licensing compliance file and talk to your child's teacher as often as possible.

Every day in a child's life makes a difference, so choose child care carefully and look for the stars!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lesli Blazer". The signature is written in a cursive style with a light pink shadow effect behind the text.

Lesli Blazer, Director
OKDHS Oklahoma Child Care Services

Why Quality Child Care?

- Better parent-child relationships
- Fewer behavior problems
- Strengthened school readiness
- Greater thinking skills
- Better attention skills
- Higher achievement scores
- Enhanced academic performance
- Better work habits in older children
- Better relationships with peers
- Greater chance for finishing school and attending college

Information gathered from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, Early Learning, Later Success: The Abecedarian Study, and Significant Benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study



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Guidelines for Promoting Your Child's Healthy Development

- Be warm, loving and responsive.
- Respond to your child's needs.
- Talk, read and sing to your child.
- Establish routines and rituals.
- Give your child safe places to play, explore and engage in physical activity.
- Make TV watching limited and selective.
- Use discipline as a chance to teach.
- Know that each child is different.
- Choose quality child care and stay involved.

Guidelines adapted from I Am Your Child "The First Years Last Forever – The New Brain Research and Your Child's Healthy Development"



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Involved Parents Make a Difference!

After choosing a child care provider, stay involved and get to know the person who cares for your child.

- Visit often.
- Talk to your child's teacher.
- Share information and ask questions.
- Spend time with your child at child care:
 - Look around, see what is going on.
 - Sit down for awhile and play or read with the children.
 - Know your child's friends.
- Meet other parents.
- Participate in the parent program and attend meetings and special events.



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One Star

One Star programs are licensed centers and homes that meet minimum requirements set by OKDHS.

One Star Plus

Homes and centers operating at the One Star Plus level agree to work toward the higher criteria of the Two or Three Star levels.



“Children attending high quality child care perform better in math and language and get along better with other children. These advantages continue into school.”

Cost, Quality & Outcomes Study of Child Care Centers

Two Star

Two Star homes and centers offer:

- Providers/teachers who have formal education and additional training in child development.
- Space arranged for a variety of activities including block building, dramatic play, art, science, math, music/movement and reading to children.
- Weekly lesson plans aligned with the Early Learning Guidelines, which physical, cognitive, language, creative, social and emotional development for each child.
- Interaction with parents through planned activities.
- Program evaluation and goal setting.

Three Star

Three Star programs are nationally accredited in addition to meeting One, One Star Plus and Two Star requirements.



“Quality child care definitely improves children’s well-being and their ability to learn.”

“Starting Points” Carnegie Corporation

Choosing Child Care

The Oklahoma Child Care Resource and Referral network offers free, accurate information to parents looking for child care services. Referral specialists discuss child care options with parents and give immediate information on locations, operations, star levels and available openings. They also provide tips on how to choose the best care for your child and your family and make referrals to families needing financial assistance.

OKLAHOMA CHILD CARE RESOURCE AND REFERRAL
1-888-962-2772

The Oklahoma Department of Human Services offers a Child Care Locator on their website, which can help you find child care in your area. The Child Care Locator lets you complete a detailed search for child care programs that meet your own selected criteria.

Follow these steps for choosing child care:

- Call the toll-free Resource and Referral Network hotline at 1-888-962-2772 or visit the OKDHS Child Care Locator at www.okdhs.org/childcarefind.
- Call for a time to visit each facility.
- When visiting each facility, evaluate using the quality checklist and ask to view the “licensing compliance file.”
- When you have narrowed down to two programs, call your local Oklahoma Department of Human Services Licensing office to schedule an appointment to review each program’s records.

Take this list with you when visiting child care programs

Name of Facility: _____

Phone: _____

Teacher/Director: _____

Star Level: _____

Yes No

BASICS

- Is the facility licensed by OKDHS?
- Is the group size okay for my child?
- Is the caregiver trained and experienced?
- Have I checked the program's records at OKDHS?

THE PLACE

- Are there different activity areas?
- Is the outdoor play area safe and interesting?
- Do I hear happy children's voices?

DOES THE CAREGIVER

- Seem patient and help the children with their needs?
- Enjoy playing and talking with children?
- Use positive discipline?
- Talk with parents about their child's day?
- Answer my questions?

ACTIVITIES

- Is there quiet and active play, inside and outside?
- Are toys and other materials readily available for my child's use?
- Is there no or very limited TV time?

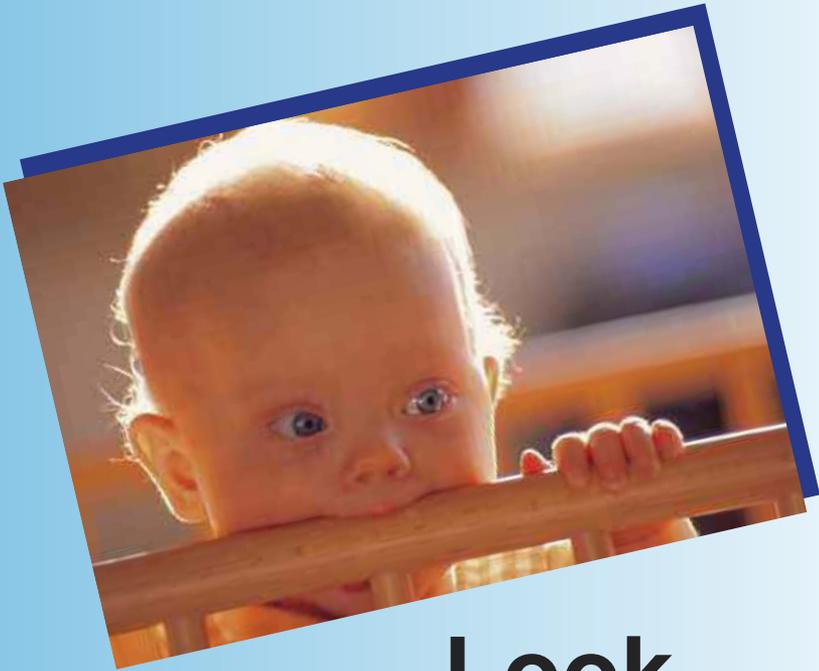
PARENT'S ROLE

- Can I visit my child's class at any time?
- Are there ways for me to be involved in the program?

Notes



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<http://childcarefind.okdhs.org/childcarefind>

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