

Child Care Centers and Private Preschools

These programs are licensed through the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) and provide care and education for children in age-based groups, either for full days or part days. Often in free-standing buildings, businesses, community centers or places of worship.

Public School Pre-Kindergarten Programs

In-school or School Readiness programs are administered by the Minnesota Department of Education. These programs are provided through public schools, including charter schools, and provide early childhood education with a goal of preparing children for kindergarten.

Family Child Care Homes

Family Child Care (FCC) Homes are licensed through the county. These providers may care for up to 14 infants, toddlers, preschoolers and school-age children in their homes. Some family child care programs are also provided in businesses, places of worship and schools. Many family child care providers offer planned play and scheduled activities that help all children in their care learn.

School-Age Care Programs

These programs care for children in kindergarten through sixth grade. They can be offered in a provider's home or in a center such as a school, community center, YMCA/YWCA, or park and recreation program. These programs may be licensed or license-exempt, depending on the facility. School-age care is not eligible for a Parent Aware Star Rating.

Early Head Start (prenatal to age 3) and Head Start (3 – 5-year-olds)

Early Head Start and Head Start promotes the school readiness of young children from low-income eligible families. These programs have comprehensive services that support the mental, social and emotional development of children from prenatal to age 5. In addition, programs provide health, nutrition, social and other services.

Drop-In Programs

This is short-term care for a few hours at a time. It is usually offered in shopping malls or community centers. Family, Friends or Neighbors Provider cares only for related children or children from no more than one unrelated family.

Care in Child's Home

Families make arrangements to have a babysitter or nanny come to their home to provide care.

Playgroups and Exchanges

These are no-cost, informal groups organized by parents. Playgroups give children time to play together under their parents' supervision. In exchanges, parents take turns caring for the children.