



# Why Choose an Accredited Child Care Provider For Your Baby?

Your baby's brain has a time period where it grows the most, the first three years of life. How much your baby's brain will develop will mostly depend on the great learning experiences he or she receives. This period of brain growth will create the foundation that will help your child succeed in school.

Because the quality of your child's earliest experiences shape his/her brain development, it is so important that you are aware of what your baby needs and this will help you decide which child care setting is best. Your baby needs:

- A safe and healthy environment
- Nurturing, supportive, secure, predictable relationships
- Individualized attention and care, a consistent response to his/her needs
- An early learning environment where he/she hears good language models



Babies and toddlers need individualized attention and consistent loving relationships. If the caregivers are watching too many children, your baby is not getting enough attention. Likewise, if your baby is being cared for by many different people, he or she is not getting enough consistency. Consistency and individual attention are important because **learning takes place when your child feels safe and loved.**

---

## Licensing and Accreditation

You will find most child care providers are licensed, but some are licensed and accredited. What is the difference?

*Licensing* means that the child care facility meets the minimum standards required by Florida's Department of Children and Families (DCF) for a child care program to be open. These requirements include minimal standards for health and safety, ratios, group size and more. To get more information about DCF's licensing standards for child care centers or family child care homes, please visit <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/programs/childcare/laws.shtml>.

*Accredited* means that the child care provider has met higher quality standards, usually set by a national organization. These child care programs have met standards beyond those established by DCF. Accredited programs seek to provide the best quality of care for your child.

For child care centers, there are many different types of accreditation, for example NAEYC, APPLE, NACECEP and others. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation sets the highest standards for infants and toddlers. For more information about NAEYC, please visit <http://www.rightchoiceforkids.org/> or call or 1-800-424-2460, extension 333 to request a list of NAEYC-accredited centers by mail.

If you choose a family child care home, ask if it is accredited by the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC). For more information about NAFCC, please visit <http://www.nafcc.org/include/parents.asp> or call 1-800-359-3817 to find a NAFCC accredited family child care in your area.

To help you in your search, please call Child Care Resource and Referral at 305-373-3521.