

Finding Child Care for Children with Disabilities

A YoungStar Guide for Families

Choosing a quality child care program can be a difficult and emotional decision. It can be even harder if your child has a disability. Finding the right program—one that’s capable of caring for your child’s physical, cognitive or behavioral challenges—can feel overwhelming. That’s why YoungStar is here to help.

Call **1-888-713-KIDS (5437)** to get personalized help from a local child care resource and referral specialist. They’ll help you find the child care programs and providers serving children with disabilities in your area.

Understand Your Options

Finding the right child care “fit” becomes even more difficult if you have a child with a disability. Taking the time to consider all of your options before making a choice will pay off in peace of mind for your family and a happier child. Just follow these steps:

1. Interview Multiple Providers

Talking to providers one-on-one is a great way to find a good child care match. It’s important to describe your child’s strengths, as well as challenges, during these interviews. And remember, it’s ok to ask specific questions about the provider’s training and experience supporting children with disabilities.

2. Visit Programs with Your Child

If you’re feeling good about a provider, take the next step and schedule a follow-up interview that includes your child. It’s your opportunity to see how the program staff interacts with your child, as well as the other children in the program.

3. Ask for References

Talking to other parents is a great way to find out if a child care center or provider is right for your family. Ask to speak with two or three families currently enrolled in the program you’re considering. If possible, talk to parents who have a child the same age as your own. You can also ask if there is a family with a child with a disability that you could talk to. This can be a great opportunity for you to ask more sensitive questions.

4. Take Things Slowly

Change can be difficult for any child. Once you’re ready to make a child care choice, take the time to ease your child into your family’s new routine. Start off with just an hour or two of care to smooth the transition and set the stage for success.

1-888-713-5437 (Toll-free) 711 (TTY)

youngstar.wi.gov



Using YoungStar Is Easy

Visit youngstar.wi.gov to compare child care providers and find helpful parenting advice.

Look for the **YoungStar rating window sticker or certificate** when you're interviewing providers.

Call **1-888-713-KIDS (5437)** to get personalized help from a local child care resource and referral specialist.

Want to Learn More?

At youngstar.wi.gov, parents can watch videos, download articles and find useful information on early childhood education, nutrition and more. You can even discover activities that encourage healthy brain development.

What to Ask

Just because a provider may have experience caring for children with disabilities doesn't mean the program is an automatic match for your family. To make sure you're comfortable with the care your child will receive, start by asking a few valuable questions:

- Do you currently or have you recently cared for a child or children with disabilities? If so, how did you individualize their care and learning?
- What training or experience do you have supporting the needs of children with disabilities?
- How are children with disabilities and/or challenges integrated into your program? Are teachers able to adapt activities to meet the various needs of each and every child?
- What certifications or special training do you (or your staff) have?
- How do you support a child's behavioral challenges?
- Are you comfortable dispensing medication? If not, are you willing to receive training?
- Do you have experience working with Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP) or Individualized Education Programs (IEP)?

For more information, visit YoungStar's Early Childhood Inclusion webpage: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar/eci>



The Department of Children and Families is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. If you have a disability and need to access services, receive information in an alternate format, or need information translated to another language, please call the Division of Early Care and Education at 608-422-6002. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind or speech disabled can use the free Wisconsin Relay Service (WRS) – 711 to contact the department.