

# Getting the Most Out of Child Care

## A YoungStar Guide for Families

Placing your child in another's care isn't easy. It takes trust and teamwork to create a safe, happy place for kids to learn and grow. So it's important to know how to take an active role in the child care experience. When you make sure your child care provider has all the information and support needed to provide excellent care, you help give your child the best possible start.

Doing your part is easier than you think. Get the most out of your child care partnership with these simple tips.

## Be Engaged

### Stay up-to-date.

Many providers use email, newsletters and even text messages to keep parents up-to-date on program news and their child's activities. Stay informed as your program's people and policies change, and ask your child's providers for updates on a regular basis.

### Teach at home.

When you know what your child is learning in school, you can reinforce those lessons at home. Ask your provider about the topics, games, storybooks and experiences your child soaks up during the day. And ask your child every day about what she or he did and learned.

### Ask for a progress report.

By the time children are three years old, their brains are almost 90% fully developed. They're learning so much every day, it's hard to keep up. That's why it's a good idea to meet with your child care provider on a regular basis—not just at drop-off and pickup times—so you can talk about your child's development and behavior at home and away from home.

## Pitch In

### Add yourself to activities.

Providers love it when parents help out with a special activity like a field trip or show-and-tell. Children also love to see their family take part. So volunteer to be a chaperone or parent advisor. Ask to participate in music or reading time. You could even share a skill, craft or special experience with the kids.

### Connect with other families.

Ask for opportunities to offer your skills, expertise or support to other families enrolled in your program. Who knows? You might swap recipes or get tips on great family vacation destinations. Every family has a lot to offer, including yours.

## Using YoungStar Is Easy

Visit [youngstar.wi.gov](http://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](http://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.

# Be Prepared

## Tell your provider everything.

Want your child to receive individualized care? Start by sharing important details about your child. This includes essential information such as allergies and medication requirements, your child's likes and dislikes, food preferences, and sleep schedule.

## Ease your child in.

The first few days in a new place are scary for anyone. For children starting at a child care center, the transition can be especially difficult. They may not want to go (or let you leave). Give yourself and your child extra time for drop-offs during the first few days. It may help soothe their anxieties (and yours too).

## Have backups.

Extra clothes. Extra snacks. More than one way to reach you. Prepare your child care team for food spills, bathroom accidents and other problems with a little preplanning. And remember to switch those backups out as the weather (or your schedule) changes.

# Be Considerate

## Stick to the schedule.

Most child care programs have specific drop-off and pickup times for a reason. After all, providers and staff have families too. Being on time makes things easier for everyone. And remember to look for changes to your program's schedule around the holidays. It will help you avoid surprises.

## Make regular payments.

Many providers have clear payment expectations laid out in their parent contracts or handbooks. Staying on top of your child care bill means no one has to worry about your child's enrollment status. If there are disputes or delays, keep communicating. And try to settle the issue as quickly and agreeably as possible.

## Say thanks.

It's always nice to hear an encouraging word. Many times, providers only hear from parents when something has gone wrong. If you and your child are happy with your child care experience, let your provider know.