

# Finding Child Care for Children With Special Needs

## A YoungStar Guide for Families

Choosing a quality child care program isn't easy. It's a difficult and emotional decision that only gets harder when your child has special needs. Finding the right program—one that's capable of caring for your children's physical, mental, learning or behavioral challenges—can feel impossible. 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 and special needs in your community.

## Understand Your Options

Finding the right child care “fit” becomes even more challenging when your child has special needs. 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 simple steps:

### **Interview several 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 challenges and strengths in detail during these interviews, so you can ask specific questions about the provider's training and experience.

### **Visit programs with your child.**

If you're feeling good about a provider, take the next step: schedule a follow-up interview that includes your child. It's your opportunity to see how the program staff interacts with children with special needs, especially yours.

### **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 whose child shares the same age and similar challenges as your own. And don't be afraid to ask pointed questions.

### **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.

## 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.

## What to Ask

Just because a provider has experience caring for children with disabilities doesn't mean that program is the right one for your family. After all, your child is unique. Make sure you're comfortable with the care your child will receive by asking a few questions like these:

- How many children with special needs have you cared for?
- Which medical conditions, behaviors or disabilities are you experienced with?
- How are children with disabilities and challenges integrated into group activities?
- What certifications or special training do you (or your staff) have?
- How do you dispense medication? Who administers it? How is it tracked?
- How do you deal with behavioral problems?
- Do you have experience working with individualized family service plans or individualized education plans?
- Do you have experience in early intervention for children?