

CHOOSE QUALITY CHILD CARE

Quality child care is critical for children in the child welfare system

Quality early education can change the life of the child(ren) in your care. Over fifty years of research proves that providing high quality early education experiences to at-risk children significantly reduces the likelihood of negative academic and life outcomes. In fact, at-risk kids who attended a quality child care were *less likely* to be referred to special education, held back, and involved in the juvenile delinquency system. Additionally, at-risk kids who attended a quality child care had *better* language, reading, and math skills. Plus, they were *more likely* to graduate high school. By age 40, at-risk kids that received high quality early education were *significantly* healthier, wealthier, less reliant on public assistance, and less likely to be incarcerated than their peers.

Want to learn more about the benefits of quality child care? Visit the following websites:

- <http://Centervideo.forest.usf.edu/Video/Center/qualityedu/start.html>
- <http://Centervideo.forest.usf.edu/qpi/qualityearlyed/qualityearlyed.html>
- <http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-the-impact-of-early-adversity-on-childrens-development-video/>

Dependency laws support choosing quality child care

Florida Statute s. 39.001(1)(a)

•“The purposes of this chapter are... to provide for the care, safety, and protection of children in an environment that fosters healthy social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development ... to promote the health and well-being of all children under the state’s care...”

Florida Statute s. 39.001(3)

•“It is the purpose of the Legislature that the children of this state be provided with the following protections: Effective treatment to address physical, social, and emotional needs... Equal opportunity and access to quality and effective education, which will meet the individual needs of each child...”

Rilya Wilson Act, Florida Statute s. 39.604(2)

•“The Legislature recognizes that children who are in the care of the state due to abuse, neglect, or abandonment are at increased risk of poor school performance and other behavioral and social problems. It is the intent of the Legislature that children who are currently in the care of the state be provided with an age-appropriate education program to help ameliorate the negative consequences of abuse, neglect, or abandonment.”

Florida Administrative Code encourages foster parents to choose quality child care

Fla. Admin. Code. 65C-13.030(6)(d): “Child care for children in licensed out-of-home care shall be in a licensed early education or child care program chosen by the caregiver(s). These providers must be participating in the school readiness program through the local early learning coalition. Examples of licensed early education or child care programs include:

1. **Gold Seal accredited child care providers or providers participating in a quality rating system;**
2. Licensed child care providers;
3. Public school providers; and,
4. License exempt child care providers, including religious exempt, registered, and non-public schools.”

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You can find quality child care in Hillsborough County

1. Call Child Care Resource and Referral at 813-906-5041 or complete an online request at https://www.elhc.org/programs_services/child-care-resource-referral/.



Request a list of Gold Seal Accredited and Early Head Start/Head Start providers in your zip code. Tell them in your phone or online request that you are asking on behalf of a child in the child welfare system and that you need the list of providers as quickly as possible.

2. Check the licensing history/inspection reports of the providers on the list: <https://cares.myflfamilies.com/PublicSearch>

Avoid providers with a Class 1 Violation which: “ is the most serious in nature, poses an imminent threat to a child including abuse or neglect and which could or does result in the death or serious harm to the health, safety or well-being of a child.” Fla. Admin. Code 65C-22.010(1)(d)(1)

3. Call your chosen provider to ensure they have space for your child(ren).
4. Visit the provider in person to ensure it’s a good fit for the child(ren) in your care.

For direct links to the above resources and a one-stop shop on everything you need to know about child care for children in the child welfare system:

<http://centerforchildwelfare.fmhi.usf.edu/Circuit13ESC.shtml>

(Look under the section called “Resources by Age Group, Ages 0 to 5”)

You can support the early learning of the child(ren) in your care

- **Be an advocate!**
Speak to the child care provider and ask whether they have any concerns for the child(ren) in your care. If so, share these concerns with the case manager and the court so the proper services can be put in place.
- **Know your child’s developmental level!**
Each child care will determine your child’s level using a developmental screener, like an Ages and Stages Questionnaire or the Battelle Developmental Inventory (See the “Understanding Your Early Education Options for 0 to 5 Year Old Children in Care” document on the above site to know which screener your provider will use). Ask for a copy of that screener and suggestions on how to help in areas where your child is below level.
- **Continue the education at home!**
Read to the child(ren) in your care every night. Sign up for VROOM: <http://www.joinvroom.org/tools-and-activities>. Through this site, you can access, via your cell phone or computer, free, quick videos on turning every day events into teachable moments. Explore the “Right on Track Child Development Guide” on the Early Childhood Council of Hillsborough County, Inc. website for ideas on how to improve your child’s development: <http://www.ecctampabay.org>