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## Family Home Childcare -vs- Licensed Day Care Center

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### What is in-home childcare?

In general, in-home daycare is childcare that's provided in a professional caregiver's home or another private residence. This means your child is cared for in a home-like setting, rather than the more institutional setting of a childcare center. There are two main types of in-home daycares:

#### Family daycare

This type of daycare typically has one caregiver who cares for six children or fewer, though the specific amount will be determined by state-defined ratios. These providers may limit themselves to a specific age range or care for children of all ages.

#### Group daycare

This type of childcare usually consists of two or more adult caregivers and a larger group of children of varied ages. The specific numbers will depend on state ratios.

Some parents prefer in-home childcare for its homey setting. Other benefits of in-home daycares include:

- Smaller caregiver-to-child ratios.
- Highly individualized care for infants and small children.
- Mixed age groups for learning and socialization.
- Varied locations, making it easier to find care close to home.

## What is a daycare center?

A daycare center is a licensed childcare provider run out of a facility that is either privately owned or operated by a non-profit organization, like a church, school or the local government. Daycare centers employ qualified caregivers, and children are typically grouped into different classrooms by age.

Daycare Center	In-Home Daycare
<p><b>Multiple childcare providers:</b> If one teacher is sick and unable to provide care, additional teachers can fill in so that parents aren't left without a backup plan.</p> <p><b>State inspected and licensed:</b> Daycare centers must meet standards for cleanliness and safety, and comply with building codes.</p> <p><b>Quality teachers:</b> The teachers in daycare centers may have a stronger educational background and take ongoing classes to fulfill requirements.</p> <p><b>Age-appropriate curriculum:</b> Age-based classrooms, learning activities, outdoor play, arts, crafts and activities help develop skills.</p>	<p><b>More individual attention:</b> "Children are often a face in the crowd in a daycare center," Anderson says. "In a family childcare home, we really get to know each other well."</p> <p><b>Affordability:</b> The <a href="#">cost of in-home daycare</a> may be cheaper than a daycare center.</p> <p><b>Fewer germs:</b> Because there are fewer children, your child may be exposed to fewer illnesses.</p> <p><b>More relaxed curriculum:</b> Children may follow a curriculum, but there's often more freedom for the in-home daycare provider to change the schedule.</p> <p><b>Siblings can remain together:</b> This is an important factor for many parents, especially those whose children are very close.</p>
<p><b>Cost:</b> Daycare centers are commercial properties, so overhead is higher than a private home, making the cost of a daycare center higher. Learn more about the <a href="#">cost of childcare</a>.</p> <p><b>Germs:</b> There are multiple children in a class and multiple classes in a center, increasing the chance for <a href="#">illness</a>.</p> <p><b>Children may have less free play:</b> Because daycare centers often teach a curriculum, children may engage in less free play.</p> <p><b>Availability:</b> Many daycares are still dealing with budget shortfalls and staffing issues caused by the pandemic. For that reason, <a href="#">daycare waitlists</a> are common.</p>	<p><b>Limited backup plans:</b> Most in-home childcare providers have a backup plan in the event of illness. However, <a href="#">emergencies</a> can happen.</p> <p><b>Less regulation:</b> In-home daycare licensing requirements vary by state. If your area doesn't regulate these programs, safety and health issues may be a concern.</p> <p><b>Difference in philosophies:</b> In-home providers are individuals. You may find the provider's philosophy is in line with your family's style.</p>

Parents often choose a daycare center for its social and educational environment. Daycare centers generally allow more kids than you'll see in an in-home daycare, but you'll also find more caregivers to watch over those children. Some of the other benefits of daycare centers include:

- Required state licensing.
- Mandated health and safety protocols and procedures.
- Specific requirements for hiring, training and certifying employees.
- Age-based socialization and education opportunities for young kids.
- Often operate using an established curriculum or childcare philosophy.

Some examples of center-based daycares include school programs, summer camps, faith-based programs, nursery schools, preschools and pre-K, as well as licensed, independently owned or chain centers. Each state's Childcare Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency determines if a provider is required to be regulated and what regulations must be met.

## Key differences between in-home daycare vs. daycare center

To help you make an informed decision, we asked childcare experts to share the pros and cons of both types of daycare. Here, Carolyn Stolov, executive director at [Wellesley Community Children's Center](#); Kathie Anderson, an in-home daycare provider in Austin, Texas; and Donna Van Hall, former preschool director in Forest, Virginia, offer their expertise.

## Final thoughts on in-home daycare vs. center daycare

There are many benefits to both an in-home daycare and a daycare center. The deciding factor is ultimately your child's individual needs and the [type of care](#) that feels most affordable and most beneficial for your family.

No matter which daycare option you choose, industry experts say [safety](#) should be your number one priority. Check your daycare's [licensing requirements](#), run background checks on the people caring for your child and focus on finding the right fit for your family's particular needs. With so many options to choose from, there's no doubt you'll be able to find a daycare where your child thrives.