



## LOOKING FOR CHILD CARE?

### When should I start looking for a program?

- Start early. If possible, visit several programs. Put your name on the waitlist of each program you are interested in. Some programs have long waitlists
- For infant care: If possible, start looking as soon as you know you are pregnant
- For Cambridge Public School programs serving 3-year-olds: Enrollment is by lottery. You must apply between October 1<sup>st</sup> and October 31st for the next September

### What types of programs are there?

There are three types to choose from that are licensed by the state and have to follow state regulations:

1. Home based family child care programs
2. Center based programs
3. Cambridge public school programs

#### • **Home based family childcare programs**

- Almost all take infants (up to 15 months) as well as toddlers (15-33 months) and pre-schoolers (2 years and 9 months to 5 years and 11 months – 2.9 to 5.11).
- Children from birth to preschool are cared for together in one group
- No group is larger than 10 children and many are smaller
- Most are open full-time (8-10 hours a day)
- Some will make part-time arrangements
- Holidays, summer schedules and other closures differ by program
- Enrollment is NOT free. Cost differs by program. The providers that are part of the Catholic Charities family child care system provide some income assistance; some of the other programs also offer assistance.
- Application must be made to individual programs or to Catholic Charities family child care system

#### • **Center based programs**

- All of the centers take pre-school age children  
Some serve infants and toddlers as well
- Centers differ in size from a single classroom to five or more classrooms
- Infants, toddlers and preschoolers are in separate age groups.
- Some programs are part-time (as few as 3 to 4 hours/day, 2 to 4 days/week)

- Some programs are full-time (8 to 10 hours a day, 5 days/week) but may also be willing to make part-time arrangements
  - Holidays, summer schedules and other closures differ by program
  - Enrollment is NOT free except for Head Start. Cost differs by program. Many of the programs provide some income assistance
  - Application must be made to individual programs except for:
    - Head Start: Apply through CAAS (Community Action Agency of Somerville)
    - DHSP preschools: Application is through DHSP and not through the Cambridge Public Schools (CPS). These preschools are in public school buildings, but are not run by CPS.
- **Cambridge Public School (CPS) programs**
    - CPS has three programs for 3-year-olds and young 4-year-olds (children must be at least 3 by August 31 to enter in September)
      - Special Start (Part time: mornings)
      - Tobin Montessori Children's House (7 am – 2 pm)
      - Fletcher Maynard Academy Scholar College (7:45 am – 3:45 pm)
    - These programs are free
    - Enrollment is by lottery
    - Application for the lottery is done at the Family Resource Center, 459 Broadway, 02138, 617-349-6551, between October 1 – 31 for the next school year
    - There are a limited number of spaces so application does not guarantee entry.

## **What is the best type of program for my child?**

What is best for each family and child is not the same. Things to think about are:

- Location—near work or home
- Hours—beginning and end time; full or part time; holidays and program closures
- Age range of children licensed to care for
- Cost and availability of tuition assistance - state subsidies and program scholarships
- Qualifications of staff and staff turnover
- Accreditation
- Group size and ratio of adults to children
- Health and Safety—cleanliness inside and outside
- Games, toys, equipment, environment and curriculum. Do they match the age of the children and reflect diversity in the community? Are things in good condition?
- Outdoor space and activities
- Back-up care if provider is ill
- Are parents encouraged to play an active role? What participation is required?
- Do the children seem happy?

## Who can help me find a program for my child?

- Jayne Cantor at the Cambridge Community Partnerships for Children: 617/349-6086; [jcantor@cpsd.us](mailto:jcantor@cpsd.us)
- The Center for Families: 617-349-6385
- Child Care Choices of Boston (serves Cambridge), 105 Chauncey Street, Boston, 02111: 617-348-6641 or 617-542-5437; <http://childcarechoicesofboston.org>
- The Department of Early Care and Education website: [www.Mass.gov/eec](http://www.Mass.gov/eec)  
Go to left-hand side of page and click on “Finding Childcare Providers in My Area”
- For Cambridge Public School Programs contact: Family Resource Center, Cambridge Rindge & Latin School, 459 Broadway, Cambridge MA 02138, 617-349-6551, <http://www.cpsd.us>, [welcome@cpsd.us](mailto:welcome@cpsd.us)

## Is there tuition assistance?

- Tuition assistance is available if your family meets certain income, work, training or education guidelines
- Scholarships, sibling discounts, sliding scale and part-time rates are available in some programs
- Ask each program what they have available and if you qualify
- For a state subsidy you need to be on the state’s waitlist. To be added to this waitlist, contact:
  - Child Care Choices of Boston at 617-348-6641 or 617-542-5437

**Cambridge Community Partnerships for Children/  
Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Grant  
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