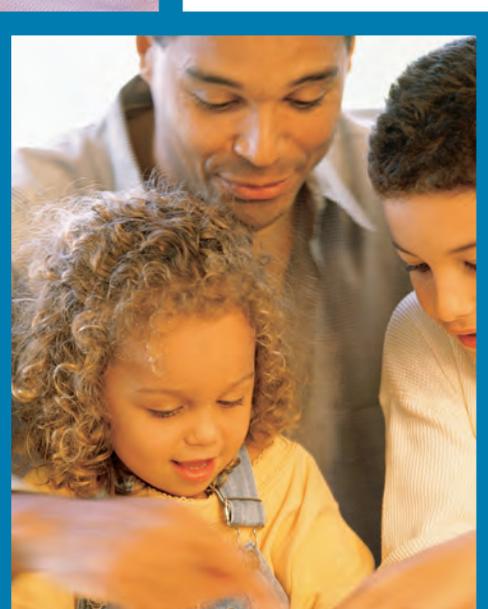
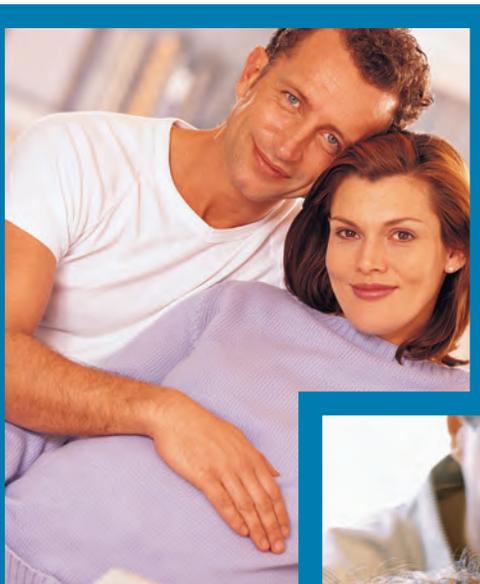


ASAP

Accessing Support For All Parents



Exploring
Your Child
Care Choices

Accessing Support For All Parents

ASAP

Child Care Aware® is a program of Child Care Aware® of America. Child Care Aware® would like to acknowledge Cathy Myers, of the Family and Home Network, for her generous contribution to the development of this guide.

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For more child care information:
1-800-424-2246
TTY: 1-866-278-9428
www.ChildCareAware.org

Accessing Support For All Parents

Introduction

The decision to stay at home or return to work is not easy. Child Care Aware's Accessing Support for All Parents (ASAP) project will help families look at the many factors involved in their child care options.

The ASAP Decision-Making Tool will allow families to:

- ▶ Consider important areas of their lives that will be affected by child care decisions
- ▶ Examine their feelings about their child care options and
- ▶ Seek the most appropriate resources and support for those choices.

Some questions you may be thinking of as you begin this process are:

- ▶ *Will I continue my full-time employment? If I do, who will care for my child? If I don't, what do I need to know about being a stay-at-home parent?*
- ▶ *What does my child need?*
- ▶ *What can my family afford? What other factors should I consider?*
- ▶ *Where do I find more information?*
- ▶ *What do other parents do?*
- ▶ *How may my personal relationships be affected by this choice?*
- ▶ *What child care is available in my area?*



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If you have questions like these, the ASAP project may be of assistance to you.



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Things to Consider



... About Child Care

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The Decision-Making Tool “Consideration” section offers you the chance to review important topics when looking at your child care options. They are:

1. Support: Family, Friends, Community, Government
2. Your Child’s Needs
3. Relationships
4. Finances
5. Work Assessment

Each family has unique qualities. There are many quality child care choices that work for children and parents. Although most of the following examples are explained in terms of two-parent families, single parents may use the same strategies by teaming up with extended family members, friends, or other single parents to share caregiving/income-earning responsibilities. Here are some strategies families use:

- ▶ **One parent at home:** One leaves the paid workforce to care for the child(ren) while the other parent has a job with pay. In a single parent family, the parent may get help by using federal, state, or local assistance programs.
- ▶ **Full-time child care:** A single parent works full-time or both parents work full-time during regular daytime hours. With this option the family uses full-time quality child care.
- ▶ **Tag-team parenting:** Two parents working full-time can provide most or even all of the care for their child themselves by working different hours.
- ▶ **Part-time employment:** Parents remain employed, but both cut back to part-time hours. If possible, each parent works 2/3 time and shares the child care responsibility or uses part-time quality child care.
- ▶ **Full-time employment plus:** One parent is working full-time and the other earns a part-time income (through part-time work with regular hours or a home-based business).
- ▶ **Single parent network:** In a single parent family, two or more families with alternating work schedules could develop a child care co-op where they agree to care for each other’s children. This may help all families financially.
- ▶ **Family help:** Single (and two) parent families are also able to use relative care. Family members take on a caregiving role while parent returns to work.

... Family, Friends, Community

A strong network will support you and your child and help provide emotional and practical assistance. Some parents are fortunate to have extended family members who are supportive and live close by. Others may make new friends and strengthen connections in their community.

It may take time and effort to create a child care network, so be persistent. Parent education groups and parent-child focused activities are good places to meet new friends with children. Remember that people of all ages and stages of life can be part of your community.

Explore other sources of support through services offered by government agencies at the local, state and national levels. Seek information from a variety of sources; try the library, human services offices, your local Child Care Resource and Referral agency, school systems, physicians, and community publications for families. Religious communities are also a good source of support for families.

As you think about the support and connections you already have and how to strengthen that network, here are some questions to consider:

Family:

Who else in my family is involved in this child care decision? Is there anyone else I/we might want to include? How might family members help?

What can other family members do to support my/our child care decision?

Do I feel comfortable discussing this with family members? If not, do I know why?

Friends:

How can I turn to my friends who don't have children for support?

How can I turn to my friends who are parents for support?

Community:

What support opportunities are available to families in my area?

Are there parent education resources in my area?

If you belong to a religious community: What is available through my place of worship?

Government:

Are there any government programs that can support my choice?



Remember that people of all ages and all stages of life can be part of your community.

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Your Child's Needs



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Learning about what children need for healthy growth is an essential part of making a decision about your child's care.

... Healthy Growth

Children are born needing basic care (food and warmth). They also need the kind of nurturing and attention that is not easy to measure or describe. Doctors and researchers have been working hard to understand and explain children's needs. Learning about what children need for healthy growth is an essential part of making a decision about your child's care.

Several years ago, at a White House conference on young children's brain development, this question was asked:

What types of early experiences are vital for intellectual and emotional growth - and how much of each is necessary?

In response, two of our nation's leading doctors, pediatrician T. Berry Brazelton, M.D. and child psychiatrist Stanley I. Greenspan, M.D. co-authored a book.* Based on their many years of research, clinical practice and teaching, they explain the things infants and toddlers need in order to "grow, learn and flourish," calling these things the "irreducible needs." They are:

1. Ongoing nurturing relationships
2. Physical protection, safety and regulation
3. Experiences tailored to individual differences
4. Developmentally appropriate experiences

5. Limit setting, structure and expectations
6. Stable, supportive communities and cultural continuity

While all the "needs" are important, the first—the need for ongoing nurturing relationships—is the basis of emotional growth. As the doctors explain, emotional growth comes first and is critical for intellectual and moral growth. In other words, if children feel loved and have a good foundation with a primary caregiver, they are better able to learn and care about themselves and others as they grow older.

Although these suggestions were aimed at the specific needs of infants and toddlers, it is important to remember that all children continue to grow and develop through supportive, nurturing relationships. Quality child care programs and those in which parents and providers work together will allow for the ongoing development of these nurturing relationships.

You will find resources at the end of this pamphlet on the development of children from birth to school age. Not only will this developmental information help you understand and nurture your child, it will be helpful to you as you look at the quality of child care settings you may consider.

*The book referenced above is: *The Irreducible Needs of Children: What Every Child Must Have to Grow, Learn and Flourish* by T. Berry Brazelton, M.D. and Stanley I. Greenspan, M.D. (Perseus Books, October 2000)

... Finding a Balance

Becoming a parent brings big changes to people's lives. If you're wondering how your decisions about caring for your child might affect your marriage/partnership, you're not alone. This decision will also change other significant relationships in your life - with friends, extended family, and co-workers. Other parents can tell you about their personal experiences - you can read books and/or ask parents in your community. Hearing others' stories might help you be prepared for some new feelings, as well as other issues you might face.

As you think about your relationships, here are some questions to consider:

- ▶ *What were our roles before our child was born?*
- ▶ *What will have to change now that we are parents?*
- ▶ *How will these roles change if one of us stays home or cuts back on paid work to care for our child(ren)?*
- ▶ *How will these roles change if each of us keeps the same paid employment we had before our child was born?*
- ▶ *How will my relationships with my spouse/children/family/friends be impacted based on our child care decision?*
- ▶ *What if I choose to stay home and I am jealous of my spouse? What if my spouse is jealous of the time I spend with our child?*
- ▶ *What if our family/friends/peers do not agree with our decision?*
- ▶ *What if I am jealous of my friends/peers who are working/have chosen to stay home with their children?*



Becoming a parent brings big changes to people's lives.

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Finances



... A Realistic Look

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Planning, living on a budget, and hard work all play a big part in a family's child care decision.

People vary greatly in how they handle the financial aspects of their lives.

Whatever your income, a realistic look at your family's finances will help you understand the role money plays in your decisions about child care.

Families with various incomes make child care choices in different ways. No matter what a family's child care choice, they should develop strategies that are best suited to their individual situation. Planning, living on a budget, and hard work all play a big part in a family's child care decision.

The following financial worksheet can help review your family's expenses and determine how various caregiving/ income-earning arrangements will affect your finances. Remember to think about future costs of cutting back on income (for instance, less income may mean having less retirement savings, loss of disability insurance coverage and employer-provided life insurance for the parent not employed full-time).

Here are some questions to consider:

- ▶ *What are our family expenses, and what is our monthly budget?*
- ▶ *Can we reduce or get rid of certain expenses?*
- ▶ *How much income do we need to meet our budget?*
- ▶ *What does child care cost in my area?*
- ▶ *How will having a child change our taxes?*
- ▶ *Might we be eligible for an Earned Income Tax Credit?*
- ▶ *Is our family eligible for any assistance with child care expenses?*
- ▶ *If one parent stays home, will he/she be able to earn part-time income?*
- ▶ *Other than earning income, what are some other ways an at-home parent can contribute to a family's financial well-being?*

It may be helpful to complete the following budgeting tool twice - once for all adults working and once for one adult staying home to care for your child(ren).

Budgeting Your Child Care Options

Income	Income 1 (Base)	Income 2 (Additional)
Total Monthly Income		

Monthly Expenses

Housing

Rent/Mortgage		
Insurance		

Utilities

Phone		
TV		
Electricity		
Gas		
Water		
Garbage		

Groceries

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Entertainment

Cell Phone		
Internet		
Movies/Other Activities		
Dining Out		
Newspaper/Magazine Subscriptions		

Automobile

Note/Loans		
Gas		
Insurance		
Maintenance		

Child Care

Cost of Care		
Supplies		
Allowances		

Work-Related costs

Lunch		
Coffee		
Office Parties		

Public Transportation		
Parking		

School (school-aged children, if applicable)

Supplies		
Lunches		
Field Trips		

Credit Cards

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Personal (include all family members)

Clothing		
Hair		
Makeup		
Cleaning		
Fitness		

Health Care

Medical		
Dentist		
Insurance		
Other		

Investments

401(k)/Retirement Fund		
Savings		

New Baby Expenses

Diapers		
Formula		
Wipes		
Extras (toys/furniture etc.)		

Other Expenses

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Total Expenses:

Income 1 - Total Expenses =

Income 1 + Income 2 =

Total expenses =

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Work Assessment



... A Realistic Look

8

Whether parents make the decision to stay home to care for their child or return to work, they find themselves thinking about the many changes that are taking place in their lives.

Families who find themselves in the child care decision-making process also find themselves looking at many aspects of their lives and the changes that are taking place. One of these areas is career development.

Before becoming a parent, a person may have certain ideas about a career path and the direction he or she would like it to take. After a child arrives, that path could take a dramatic turn, leaving a career-driven person longing to stay home to care for his or her child. On the other hand, if that career path stays its course, parents will also need to consider their options for caring for their child.

Whether parents make the decision to stay home to care for their child or return to work, they find themselves thinking some of the following:

- ▶ *What would be the ideal way for our family to care for our child(ren)?*
- ▶ *How strongly is my happiness and identity tied to my career?*

- ▶ *Can I arrange to have flexible work hours? To cut back to part-time work? How easy/difficult would it be to resume my career after a break away from it?*
- ▶ *If I choose to stay home, how will I feel about not bringing home a paycheck?*
- ▶ *Will my spouse/partner value the time I spend nurturing our child and the unpaid work I do for our family?*
- ▶ *If I don't work out of the home, am I confident that my spouse will continue to view me as an equal partner, especially with regard to financial decisions?*
- ▶ *If I stay in the workforce, how confident am I in the child care arrangements I've found for my child?*
- ▶ *How flexible is my employer? My spouse's employer? Do either (or both) of us travel on business?*

Quality Child Care Options

... In Your Area

As part of the child care decision-making process, it will help to have a realistic idea of the type and quality of child care available to you. Whether you're looking for full-time or part-time child care, you must learn how to assess the safety and quality of any child care situation you're considering. Here are some of the questions you may have:

- ▶ *Who do I talk to about finding child care?*
- ▶ *What should I know about quality child care? What does it look like?*
- ▶ *Is one type of child care better than others?*
- ▶ *What if a family member has offered to provide care - what should I know about safety and other issues? What if I disagree with something this person does with my child?*
- ▶ *What care is available in my area?*

Child Care Aware® provides information that can help answer these questions and more. Brochures on many topics related to child care are available by email, mail, or via the website. To request them or receive more information about your local Child Care Resource and Referral agency please call Child Care Aware® at

**1-800-424-2246 or visit
www.ChildCareAware.com**

Child Care Aware®, a program of Child Care Aware® of America, is committed to helping parents find the best information on locating quality child care and child care resources in their community. This is done by raising visibility for local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies (CCR&R) nationwide and by connecting parents with the local agencies best equipped to serve their needs.

Local CCR&R agencies help parents take the guesswork out of choosing care by providing referrals to local child care providers, sharing information on state licensing requirements, and explaining child care financial assistance programs. CCR&Rs provide guidance that is tailored to each individual family by phone, by email, or in person.



Whether you're looking for full-time or part-time child care, you must learn how to assess the safety and quality of any child care situation you're considering.

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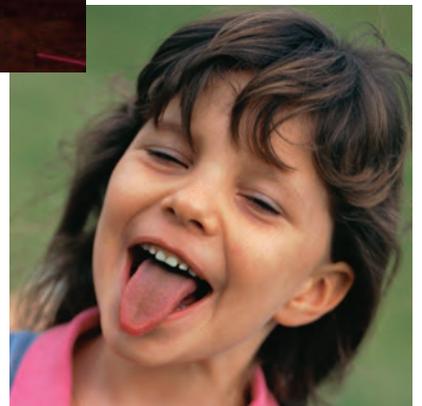
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A Child Care Decision

That Works for Your Family



After you consider the questions and information from the “Consideration” section and whatever other questions that have occurred to you, take some time to examine your thoughts and feelings. Then make the best decision for your family at this time. As your family’s needs change, you can return to the Family Decision-Making Tool to help re-evaluate your family’s needs and options. Whatever arrangements you make for your child to have quality care, Child Care Aware’s ASAP project offers you resources and support.



... And Support

Below you will find the name, website, and phone number for resources that will assist in your child care decision-making process. In addition to the following resources, don't forget to access your local library, community center, religious organizations, medical professionals and Child Care Resource and Referral agency. These places may provide general information and support to you as a parent.

The following descriptions indicate how the resources relate to the Decision-Making Tool: *F- Finances; S- Support; R- Relationships; W- Work Assessment; C- Your Child's Needs*

Child Care Aware® of America:

Provides resources that include: Child Care Aware®, military child care assistance programs, and the Are You Aware newsletter. Child Care Aware® of America has ongoing programs that support families, child care providers, local CCR&Rs, and public policy. (S)

1515 N. Courthouse Road
Arlington, VA 22201
(703) 341-4100
www.usa.childcareaware.org

National Association for the Education of Young Children:

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) is dedicated to improving the well-being of all young children, particularly from birth through age 8. (S,C)

(202) 232-8777
Toll Free: (800) 424-2460
www.naeyc.org

Future of Children:

An organization that seeks to promote effective policies and programs for children by providing policy makers, service providers, and the media with timely, objective information based on the best available research. (S, C)

FOC@princeton.edu
www.futureofchildren.org



Don't forget to access your local library, community centers, religious organizations, medical professionals and CCR&Rs.

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Resources



... And Support

Zero to Three:

A nonprofit organization that promotes the healthy development of infants and toddlers by supporting and strengthening families, communities, and those who work on their behalf. (C, R)

(202) 638-1144
www.zerotothree.org

National Fatherhood Initiative:

A nonprofit, non-sectarian, nonpartisan organization sponsoring public awareness campaigns that promote responsible fatherhood. (S, C, R)

(301) 948-0599
www.fatherhood.org

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA): Food and Nutrition:

Information on dietary health, food safety, child nutrition programs, food pyramid, and more. (C)

(202) 720-2791
<http://usda.gov>

Money on MSN.com:

A part of msn.com that focuses on various financial issues from banking information to budgeting tips and retirement advice. (F)

www.msn.com/en-us/money

... And Support

Mommysavers:

A website targeted to mothers with tips on living well for less money. Coupons, resources, low-cost activity ideas, as well as shopping and financial advice are available online. (F,S)

www.mommysavers.com

Babycenter:

An online resource guide for families. The website offers resources, developmental guidelines, a message board for parents, articles, and advice from professionals. (All subject areas)

www.babycenter.com

Mothers and More:

A non-profit support organization for mothers. (S)

<http://mothersandmore.org>

Parents Magazine: (All subject areas)

www.parents.com

Parenting Magazine: (All subject areas)

www.parenting.com

International MOMS Club:

An international organization designed to offer support to stay-at-home mothers. The organization has over 2,000 local chapters. (S)

www.momsclub.org



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Resources



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... And Support

MOPS (Mothers of Preschoolers):

An organization with local groups that offer support to mothers. Other resources include books, an online radio program, a monthly publication, and the MOPS International Membership. (S)

www.mops.org

Mocha Moms:

A support group for stay-at-home mothers of color. (S)

www.mochamoms.org

Family and Home Network:

A national organization that offers encouragement, information and affirmation to at-home mothers and fathers through their website and blog. In addition, other resources and sources of support as well as public policy information are offered. (S,R)

www.familyandhome.org

PBS: PBSkids and PBSparents

Information, games, activities, and parenting advice offered on the website for the Public Broadcasting Service. (S,C,R)

www.pbs.org
www.pbs.org/parents/

Family TLC: Tools to Enhance the Parent/Child Relationship:

A resource providing busy adults with resources to encourage learning and enrich relationships with their children. (C, R)

1 (800) 677-6644
www.familytlc.net/

... And Support

CafeMom:

CafeMom is a national organization for moms. The membership to CafeMom offers resources and support to mothers, as well as incentives for shopping at particular retailers. (All subject areas)

www.cafemom.com

Dad Stays Home:

An online community with support, resources, and information for stay-at-home dads. (All subject areas)

www.dadstayshome.com

MrMomZ:

An online resource for stay at home fathers providing support, information, and resources. (S, C)

www.mrmomz.com

Working Mother Magazine:

A publication of Working Mother Media targeted toward mothers in the workforce. (W)

www.workingmother.com

The resources listed in this booklet are intended to be used for informational purposes only. We are not responsible for the content or maintenance of these resources. For more information or resources, contact Child Care Aware® at 1 (800) 424-2246 or www.childcareaware.org.



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For All Parents

About

Child Care Aware® of America

Child Care Aware® of America represents a network of more than 450 Child Care Resource and Referral agencies (CCR&Rs) located in every state and most communities across the United States. CCR&R agencies help families, child care providers, and communities find, provide, and plan for affordable, quality child care.

Since 1987, Child Care Aware® of America has been working to improve early care and education for children by:

- ▶ Providing training, resources, and best practices standards to local and state CCR&Rs that support high quality, accountable services.
- ▶ Promoting national policies and partnerships that facilitate universal access to quality child care.

Child Care Aware® of America is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) member organization of CCR&Rs and other organizations, businesses, and individuals interested in supporting our work and in receiving Child Care Aware® of America reports and resources.

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1515 N. Courthouse Rd.,
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