After studying this chapter, you will be able to

- list and describe the various types of early childhood programs available to parents and their children.
- assess the advantages and disadvantages of each type of program.
- name the three types of center sponsorship.
- explain steps families may take in choosing quality child care.
- list indications of quality in early childhood programs.
- recognize licensing rules and regulations that help keep centers safe.
- list the components of center accreditation.

**Terms to Know**

- family child care
- home child care centers
- custodial care
- Montessori approach
- Head Start
- school-age child care programs
- checking-in services
- parent cooperatives
- laboratory schools
- universal pre-kindergarten (UPK)
- licensing rules and regulations
- child care license
- accredited

**Key Concepts**

- There are many types of child care programs, all of which have advantages and disadvantages.
- Child care programs can have public, private, or employer sponsorship.
- Licensing and accreditation are important in the selection of child care programs.

**Reading Advantage**

Skim the chapter by reading the first sentence of each paragraph. Use this information to create an outline of the chapter before you read it.
Today, many young children attend early childhood programs. The number of children in these programs continues to grow. Parents place their children in early childhood programs for two main reasons.

First, many parents like the rich learning environment of a high-quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood program. Brain research shows that children learn from the earliest moments of life. Their learning is most rapid in the first five years. High-quality programs stimulate learning in this period. Studies show that children from high-quality programs did better in primary grades than other children in reading, math, and social skills. They also get along with their peers better and have fewer behavioral problems. Second, parents who work outside the home must provide for their children’s needs during working hours. For this reason, parents may enroll their children in early childhood programs. Parents pay to provide safe and nurturing care in a developmentally appropriate setting. In high-quality programs, learning needs will also be met.

Distinct differences exist among the many types of early childhood programs. These programs may differ in their philosophies, ownership, and program offerings. Programs also vary in size, staff qualifications, hours of operation, facilities, and fees. Finally, programs may differ greatly in terms of quality, even when they are of the same type.

Some types of programs are more common than others. However, all of them serve a very important purpose by meeting the needs of young children. See Figure 2-2 for child care options parents most often choose.

**Family Child Care Homes**

A popular form of child care in the United States provided other than by a relative or parent is called family child care homes. In this type of program, child care is provided in a private home with a small number of children. Often it is conveniently located in the child’s own neighborhood. Some states require licensing for family child care homes. Other states may require certification by a community agency. These programs are often popular for infants and toddlers, but children might range from infants to school-age. Moreover, children may attend up to 12 hours per day.

**Child Care Centers**

Facilities that offer full-day children’s programs are often called child care centers. This has become the most popular type of care and education. The focus of most of these centers is to provide care and education. The care is designed to meet the child’s basic nutrition, health, and safety needs. The curriculum emphasizes the whole child including his or her social, emotional, cognitive, and physical needs.

Most child care centers open early in the morning and remain open until six or seven o’clock in the evening. Some centers provide care for children 24 hours per day. For parents whose children need care during the evening or early morning hours, this service is most convenient.
The program provided by a child care center depends on the educational background and skills of the staff. State licensing rules also influence the program. Some centers simply provide custodial care. This type of care focuses primarily on meeting the child’s physical needs. The emphasis is on a safe and healthful environment. Meals are usually provided.

Ideally, the program should meet needs in all areas of development. The focus should be on the whole child and include a balance of engaging activities. Brain development is fostered in an environment that offers a variety of learning experiences.

Montessori Schools

In the early 1900s, Maria Montessori developed her own method of education. She was the first woman in Italy to receive a degree in medicine. Early in her career, she was an assistant doctor at a clinic that served children with mental disabilities.

While working with these children, Montessori developed her theory of education. This theory stated children learn best by being active. Montessori soon learned these methods could also be used with other children. This led to the development of the first Montessori school in Rome.

Montessori’s methods became known all over the world. After a short period of popularity, however, interest in this method declined for the next 40 years. In the 1950s, there was a rebirth of the Montessori method. Magazines and television helped make this method known.

Montessori Approach

In her first schools, Montessori stressed proper nutrition, cleanliness, manners, and sensory training. Children also worked with equipment she designed. See 2-3. These materials were self-correcting and required little adult guidance. The materials were organized from simple to complex. By handling and moving the materials, the children’s senses were trained and they learned to think. They also learned number concepts as well as motor, language, and writing skills.

Montessori believed in self-education. The primary goal of the Montessori approach was for children to “learn how to learn.” This approach allowed the child to explore materials that were meant to instruct. Certain materials were given to the child by the teacher in a prescribed sequence. This sequence was related to the child’s physical and mental development. Montessori felt that this approach would provide the child freedom within limits.

Independence is stressed in Montessori schools. Children must learn to care for themselves. Teachers provide little help. As a result, children learn to button, zip, tie, and put on coats and boots. These experiences are called practical life experiences in the Montessori curriculum.

The purpose of sensory training is to help children learn touch, sound, taste, and sight discrimination. One piece of equipment for this training is a set of sandpaper blocks that vary in texture. The children are told to rub their fingers across the blocks. Their goal is to correctly match blocks with like textures. Musical bells with varying tones are used in the same way. Children match bells that have like tones.

Academics are also stressed in the Montessori program. However, before a child is introduced to these experiences, sensory training must be mastered. Then, to teach letter recognition, sandpaper letters are used. After the teacher introduces a letter, children are encouraged to trace the letter with their fingertips. Numbers are taught in the same manner. When a child demonstrates knowledge of and interest in letters, reading instruction may be started.

Head Start

In the 1960s, the federal government designed the Head Start program to overcome the negative effects of poverty on young children. The program mainly provides child care and education for four- and five-year-olds from low-income families. More recently, it has added some programs for infants and toddlers. Today, Head Start is one of the most successful preschool and family support programs in the country. Head Start programs may be full-time or part-time. The programs may be center based or home based. Head Start provides a variety of medical and social services to promote children’s development.
Education
The curriculum in a Head Start program is designed to meet the needs of each child. One goal is to build self-esteem that will lead to future success in school. Staff encourage self-confidence, curiosity, and self-discipline.

A variety of learning experiences are designed to meet the children's needs in all four areas of development. Staff and the child's entire family work as a team to plan curriculum and teach children. Parent involvement is the heart of the program.

On preschool achievement tests, Head Start children perform equal to or better than their peers. Once they enter school, these children are more likely to be successful.

Nutrition
Many children who take part in Head Start do not receive nutritious meals at home. Nutrition then is a vital part of the program.

Federal rules require the center to provide at least one snack and one hot meal every day. The nutrition program serves foods that reflect the child's ethnic and cultural preferences. The goal is to help children make healthful food choices and develop good eating habits.

Health
All children who attend a Head Start program are given a total health plan. Dental, medical, and mental health services are provided. Prior to enrollment, many of these children have never visited a dentist. Children who have not already received childhood immunizations are given them while they are enrolled.

Parental Involvement
Head Start recognizes the parent as the child's first teacher. Supporting parental involvement is vital to the program's success. Parents are encouraged to help recruit new children, assist in the center, and take part in policy meetings. Thus, Head Start parents are able to influence administrative decisions.

Kindergarten
In 1837, the first kindergarten was opened by Frederick Froebel in Germany. The kindergarten curriculum stressed play. Froebel believed that self-development took place through creative activities such as play. The children in this kindergarten, like many today, engaged in painting, stringing beads, blockbuilding, and clay modeling. The children also cared for pets, sang songs, and gardened.

The first American kindergarten was opened in Watertown, Wisconsin, in 1856. It was held in the home of Margerenthia Schurz. This mother and teacher had studied under Froebel. Mrs. Schurz first opened the kindergarten for her own children and four of their cousins.

Today, kindergartens are part of most public and many private school systems. They are usually restricted to children who are at least four years old.

Schedules
There are three basic scheduling patterns in kindergarten: half-day, full-day, and full-day/alternating day sessions. The half-day session usually runs from two and one-half to three and one-half hours per day. Full-day sessions run from six to eight hours per day. Full-day/alternating day programs vary. Some programs meet every other day. Others require children to attend on Tuesday and Thursday the first week, and on Monday and Friday the next week. Other alternating programs have children attend two full days and one-half day. To illustrate, one group may attend all day on Monday and Wednesday, plus on Friday morning. The other group might attend all day on Tuesday and Thursday, as well as Friday afternoon. For some children, these alternating schedules may be confusing. Studies show that children thrive on predictable schedules.

Goals
Goals for a kindergarten program permit variety. Basic objectives of most kindergarten programs include

★ respect for the contributions, property, and rights of other children

Focus on Health
Conducting Daily Health Checks
As children arrive at the early childhood facility, a trained staff member should conduct a daily health check. This helps reduce transmission of communicable disease. Through observation, talking with parents or legal guardians, and possibly talking with children, the staff member will look for changes in behavior or appearance from the previous day that indicate illness or injuries of children or family members. Since the date of last attendance, a staff member will look for such signs of illness as eye drainage, vomiting, diarrhea, skin rashes, itchy skin or scalp, or nits (with a lice outbreak) and will check for elevated body temperature if symptoms warrant it.

If a child becomes sick during the day, a facility must provide a separate place for the child to rest in comfort with supervision. Parents or guardians should be called and asked to take the child home. Written records about daily health checks are a requirement for all facilities.
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Curriculum
Kindergarten curriculum may vary from school to school. Some schools stress certain preacademic skills, such as learning the names and sounds of alphabet letters. Other programs focus more on social development. These programs are less structured than those that stress preacademics.

Kindergarten teachers, unlike most elementary teachers, have more freedom in planning curriculum. Studies show that in most kindergarten programs, about 50 percent of the day is spent on creative activities. Included are art, woodworking, blockbuilding, storytelling, and music. Free play, self-care, and rest fill the remaining time, 2-5. The teacher provides social studies, mathematics, language, and science activities as well.

School-Age Child Care
School-age child care programs provide care for children before and/or after school. These programs are often sponsored by schools, houses of worship, or child care centers. Children from 5 to 10 years old most often attend. The program supplements regular classes. These children are provided assistance with homework. They also play games and take part in other activities.

As an alternative, some parents use checking-in services. These services hire workers who call the home to check whether the child has arrived safely. This is a good option only for children who are mature enough to provide self-care until parents arrive.

Parent Cooperatives
Parent cooperatives are formed and run by parents who wish to take part in their children’s preschool experience. Member control allows parents to prepare budgets, hire teachers, set program policies and goals, and assist in the classroom. These programs may offer full-day or half-day programs.

Cooperatives provide developmental experiences for adults as well as children. Specifically, parents
★ obtain guidance in their jobs as parents
★ learn what children are like at different ages and stages
★ gain several free mornings each month

Advantages and Disadvantages
There are many advantages to teaching in a parent cooperative. Since the parents make the administrative decisions, collect fees, and order and repair equipment, the teacher can devote more time to the children and curriculum. Another advantage can be the special relationships that many times develop between parents and teachers.

A major disadvantage of a parent cooperative is the lack of control on the teacher’s part. Although the teacher acts as an adviser, parents are usually responsible for making rules. At times, there may be differences of opinion between teacher and parents. For instance, parents may feel that children do not have to help return toys to the storage place. The teacher may feel differently. This can cause problems for many teachers.

Sessions
Parent cooperatives usually operate for two or three hours, two to five days each week. Sometimes these groups are structured by the children’s ages. For example, on Tuesday and Thursday mornings, a group of two-year-old children will be scheduled. On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings, three-year-olds may attend. Other centers may prefer to use the “family-type” grouping. In this type of setting, children of mixed ages may all be included in one group.

Fees
Due to the parent’s involvement, fees charged at a parent cooperative are often less than at other programs. Costs are reduced by hiring only a head teacher. Parents serve as the classroom aides. Generally, each parent will assist in the classroom several times each month. In addition, parents volunteer to perform many of the service activities. They may clean and maintain the building, prepare snacks, type newsletters, and do some special jobs, such as painting the classroom.

Laboratory Schools
Laboratory schools, or university- and college-affiliated programs, are located on a postsecondary or college campus. Although they provide excellent...
programs for children, their primary purpose is to support practical experiences for future teachers and to serve as a study group for research. Most of these schools have a highly qualified staff, a well-planned curriculum, up-to-date facilities, and excellent equipment.

**High School Child Care Programs**

In the last two decades, many high schools have started providing vocational training for child care occupations. Like the laboratory schools, these programs train future child care professionals. Many high schools have their own child care laboratory facilities where students can work with preschool children. The preschool program may operate two or three days a week. Preschool children of high school students, faculty, and community members usually attend the program.

The high school students plan and present the curriculum under the supervision of a teacher who has a degree in early childhood education. Some high school students may observe the children while others work directly with the children. The following week, the students who observed the preceding week then work with the preschooolers while the other students observe them.

**Sponsorship of Early Childhood Centers**

Early childhood centers can be grouped based on sponsorship. Basically, there are three kinds of sponsorship: public, private, and employer-sponsored centers.

**Public Sponsorship**

Publicly sponsored programs are funded by federal, state, or local governments. Some of these funds come through school districts. Other funds may come through social service agencies.

An example of a publicly sponsored program is Head Start. Most parents pay no fee for their child to attend Head Start. However, a fee is required if their income exceeds the federal guidelines for the program. Most of the expenses for the program are covered through grants received from the federal government. Funding is usually provided on an annual basis.

State funds may help support programs designed for educational purposes. These programs may be housed in a university, college, secondary school, or vocational school. Examples include child care centers, preschool centers, laboratory schools, and high school child care programs.

Publicly funded child care centers, preschools, and laboratory programs may receive several forms of financial support in addition to parental fees. For instance, a publicly funded child care center may also receive funds from the United Way, community donations, and tuition. Likewise, a laboratory school on a college campus may receive tuition donations or scholarships through alumni groups.

**Private Sponsorship**

The largest group of privately sponsored programs is the privately owned center. These centers rely on parent fees to cover most of the operating expenses.

A privately sponsored program may be operated by a house of worship, hospital, or charitable organization. Many of these child care centers are nonprofit. They may be governed by a voluntary board of community members and operated as a service to the community.

Most private programs are operated by independent owners. Many of these centers are operated by families. Their motivation in operating a center is to provide a service that makes a profit.

**Child Care Corporations**

Some child care centers are a part of chains operated by large national corporations, although some chains are privately held. Midsize chains typically operate on a regional basis. Often these centers are built and located in large cities and suburban areas. To make a profit in these centers, the enrollment must be high. The chains are managed by a central administration that furnishes the financial backing and sets policy. Curriculum guides may be developed by curriculum specialists hired by the organization and provided to the center staff in each of the locations.

**Employer Sponsorship**

The number of businesses and industries providing their employees with some type of child care assistance is growing. Some employer-sponsored child care providers have extended their services. They may include special activities for school-age children and care for older adults and mildly ill children. The employer may pay part or all of the costs of the services. The center can be located on-site or nearby.

Employers sponsor child care to reduce the conflict between family and work responsibilities. Studies show that there is less employee turnover and absenteeism at companies that provide some form of child care. At such companies, employees have better work attitudes, new employees are attracted, community relations improve, and good publicity is received. Moreover, there are tax incentives for companies who sponsor child care.

Companies can provide child care assistance in several ways, 2-7.

**Types of Employer-Sponsored Child Care Assistance**

- Company owned, on-site center
- Off-site center sponsored by one or more companies
- Company sponsored, vendor provided centers
- Vouchers provided by company to subsidize care
- Sick child care
- Referral services

Companies may assist families with child care in many ways.
A company-owned, on-site child care center is one option. Such a center may be located at or near the work site. With this type of program, the company may hire a director to run the program. Other companies contract with child care chains or firms specializing in child care to operate the center.

There are advantages and disadvantages to an on-site child care facility. One advantage is that parents can spend breaks and lunch hours with their children. In large cities, however, this model may not work. Employees who commute long distances to work may find it difficult to travel with children on public transportation or in car pools.

The off-site center is another option. This model is often used when several companies form a group. Each company may not have enough need for their own child care center. By sharing a facility, the costs and risks are shared by all the companies in the group.

The off-site location may be closer to the parents’ homes. Therefore, transportation times are shorter. If space is available, this type of model may also serve other children from the community.

The vendor model allows companies to purchase space in a child care center or several centers. This model is ideal for small companies. It is not as costly as opening a center. There are no costs for start-up, investment in a building, or center administration.

Companies respect parental choice when the voucher model is provided. Parents receive a voucher or coupon worth a certain amount of money from the company. Some companies will pay for all child care costs, while others pay only a portion. This model may be preferred by parents who do not live close to the work site. Thus, it is a useful model for companies in large cities.

One disadvantage of the voucher model is that the money received must be declared as income on tax returns. However, the employee can deduct the cost of child care from federal taxes (and state taxes where allowed).

Child care for ill children is provided by some companies. This benefit can take two forms. A center may provide services for children who are ill and cannot attend school. When this is done, the health department as well as the state licensing agency must be notified. This works best for children who are recovering from an illness, but are not well enough to return to school. The second form allows for a nurse to be sent to a sick child’s home to provide care. This allows the parent to go to work.

Finding a quality child care program near home is a problem for many parents. To assist parents in this process, some companies provide a referral service that matches the parents’ needs with centers. The company may hire their own resource specialist or contract a resource and referral agency.

Generally, parents are given a list of community child care centers. Specific information on each center is collected and given to the parents. Included are the center’s location, fees, hours of operation, goals, enrollment capacity, policies, curriculum, staff qualifications, and special services. Maps showing the location of the centers are often provided to help the parents in the selection process.

### Universal Pre-Kindergarten

Another type of early childhood education program is called universal pre-kindergarten (UPK). UPK is sponsored at the state level.

These programs are designed for three- and four-year-old children. A high-quality, literary-rich environment is provided. Children benefit from being involved in this environment before they enter kindergarten. They then start kindergarten eager to learn and ready for success. When children lack quality early learning experiences, they start school at a disadvantage to others.

#### Selecting a Child Care Program

Selecting an early childhood program is one of the most important decisions that parents make. Comfort with the children’s care and education can greatly affect the quality of family life, 2-8 For
Part One  The Children and You

First and foremost, parents want their children to be safe and comfortable. They want a program that welcomes their child and promotes all areas of the children’s development. Cost and location are important, too. Working parents prefer the convenience of a program near their home or job.

Parents must choose a program they can afford as well. For example, parents with lower incomes may need to use a public program or a private program with low fees.

Quality of the program is a key factor. Parents are interested in the program’s goals, activities, and schedule. Variety and balance among activities is desirable. Quality programs offer ample materials, equipment, and space. These programs also offer smaller group sizes and more adults within each group. This allows children to receive more attention and personal care. See 2-10 for the adult-child ratios recommended for various age groups by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

Many parents ask about the training and experience of the staff. Studies show staff members with early childhood education and experience are often more sensitive to children’s needs. They provide more stimulating, developmentally appropriate care and education. Well-trained staff members ensure that learning experiences are meaningful and respectful for child and families. Staff use a variety of teaching strategies to be responsive to the needs of individual children.

Asking about staff turnover rates can help parents in choosing a program. Parents should avoid choosing programs with high staff turnover. First, frequent staff changes may be a sign of low staff wages or poor working conditions. These may indicate problems with the quality of the program. High staff turnover also interferes with children’s sense of security. To feel secure, young children need to form close relationships with one or two caregivers. They also need a predictable environment. Staff turnover disrupts the environment and prevents children from forming close relationships with caregivers.

Parents want a facility that is safe for their children. For example, many centers have a security system that helps them monitor who enters and leaves the building. The building should also have smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, and evacuation plans. Parents desire a facility that is clean and in good repair.

The Selection Process

Most parents follow the same process in selecting a child care program. As a teacher, you need to understand this process and your role in it. Parents need to know much

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### Selecting Quality Child Care

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Is the center accredited by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Do the children appear to be happy, active, and secure?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Are all staff members educationally qualified?</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Do staff members attend in-service training, professional meetings, and conferences on a regular basis?</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Are staff meetings conducted regularly to plan and evaluate program activities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Do staff members observe, assess, and record each child’s developmental progress?</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Does the curriculum support the children’s individual rates of development?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Do the staff and curriculum celebrate diversity?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Are the indoor and outdoor environments large enough to support a variety of activities?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Is the environment inviting, warm, and stimulating?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Is equipment provided to promote all four areas of development: physical, cognitive, social, and emotional?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Are safe and sanitary conditions maintained within the building and on the playground?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Are teacher-child interactions positive?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Are teachers using developmentally appropriate teaching strategies?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Are families welcome to observe and participate?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>16. Is sufficient equipment available for the number of children attending?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Does the climate in the center “feel” positive?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Do teachers meet with families regularly to discuss the child’s needs, interests, and abilities?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In order to help ease the burden of choosing child care for their children, you may wish to supply interested families with this questionnaire.
Part One  The Children and You

about a program before they can choose it. Your role will be to help parents gain the needed information. As parents begin a search, they want to identify options. Some parents start by contacting a child care resource and referral agency for a list of licensed programs in their community. Other parents search the telephone book for available programs. Parents also ask people they know about experiences with the available programs. Many parents seek the advice of other parents who use early childhood programs. Parents often trust this more than information given by the program itself.

Next, parents often begin calling available programs. First questions often involve what age groups the program serves, whether openings exist in their child’s age group, and what the hours of operation are. Then, parents might ask about fees and location.

Parents who are still interested will ask about the program, staff, and activities. From there, they may arrange a visit to the program. A visit during program hours lets parents inspect the environment, observe the program, and meet the staff. Parents may want to see the whole facility, including the kitchen, restrooms, classrooms, and outdoor play areas. They will often ask to see the daily and weekly schedules as well as the menu for meals and snacks. Parents also want to observe the interactions of staff with children and other adults in the program.

After the visit, parents may have additional questions. They may need to visit a program several times before making a final decision. Parents may also want to bring their child to see how the child responds to the environment. With all of this information, parents can decide which available early childhood program will best meet the needs of the child and family.

Licensing Rules and Regulations

Licensing rules and regulations are standards set to ensure that uniform and safe practices are followed. Licensing rules and regulations are typically stated in terms of conditions that affect the safety and health of the children. They are also designed to protect parents, employers, and employees.

Currently, every state in the U.S. has licensing rules and regulations to promote safe, healthful environments for children in out-of-home care. Many licensing systems exist because no two states are alike. Communities have different needs and vary considerably. These rules and regulations change in response to research, monetary considerations, and politics.

A child care license is a state-provided certificate granting permission to operate a child care center or family child care home. Many states require that the license be posted in the center’s entryway. Most licenses include the center’s name, period for which the license is effective, and number of children permitted to attend. Programs are typically monitored with scheduled and unscheduled inspections. When a violation is noted, some states require that a copy of the official violation be posted in the entryway. Once the violation has been corrected, the posting can be removed. This is a way of communicating the status of the center to families, prospective employees, and the community.

Before opening a new center, the first step is to contact the state licensing agency to obtain an application. Not all programs need to be licensed, however. Some licensing requirements depend on whether the children attend full-time or part-time. In some states, parent cooperatives, churches, and military programs are exempt from obtaining a license. Centers in public schools or university laboratory schools are also exempt in some states. It is important to carefully study your state’s standards. Typically, the following topics must be addressed in writing to obtain a license:

- admission procedures and enrollment records
- physical space requirement
- written policies and record keeping
- adult-child ratios
- staff characteristics
- personnel policies
- safety procedures
- daily schedule
- transportation policies
- health procedures
- foodservice and nutrition
- parent involvement

You can obtain your state’s regulations or compare regulations from different states online.

Center Accreditation

The best indicator of high-quality early care and education is accreditation. Being accredited certifies that a set of standards has been met by an early childhood program. The National Academy of Early Childhood Programs, a division of NAEYC, administers a voluntary accreditation system. This system has been designed for early childhood programs and preschools serving children from birth through age five. It is also designed for programs that serve school-age children in before-school and after-school care.

The purpose of this voluntary system is to improve the quality of programs for young children in group care. It assists families in their search for high-quality programs for their children. In addition, it helps assure parents that their children are receiving quality care. Public recognition is the main benefit of achieving accreditation status.

To be eligible for accreditation status, a center must conduct a self-study. The self-study is an evaluation process designed by the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs. The self-study is a three-step process. It requires from four to eighteen months to complete. First, a self-study on 10 categories of center operations is completed. 2-11. This is done by the directors, teachers,
and parents. This process provides valuable professional development experiences. Next, a validation visit is conducted on-site by trained professionals. The final step is a decision by a team of experts representing the National Academy of Early Childhood Programs. A recent study shows that accreditation has improved program quality. The process has made improvements a smoother and easier process. Center directors reported the greatest gains in the areas of curriculum, followed by administration, health, and safety. Most directors also reported that accreditation had increased the visibility of their programs. Figure 2-12 contains a list of organizations that have accepted standards for quality practice.

### Standards for Quality Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Association</th>
<th>Types of Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Association for the Education of Young Children</td>
<td>Birth through kindergarten programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National After-School Association</td>
<td>School-age programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Association for Family Child Care</td>
<td>Family child care programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Association of Child Care Professionals</td>
<td>Child care centers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2-12 These organizations have standards for quality practice. Are their names familiar to you?

### Categories of Center Operations Covered by the Accreditation Process

- Evaluation processes
- Curriculum
- Administration
- Health and safety
- Physical environment
- Staff qualification and development
- Staff-children interactions
- Staff-parent interactions
- Staffing patterns
- Nutrition and food services

A quality early childhood program will meet the developmental needs of children. It also fosters positive interactions between families, staff, and administrators involved in the program.

A recent study shows that accreditation has improved program quality. The process has made improvements a smoother and easier process. Center directors reported the greatest gains in the areas of curriculum, followed by administration, health, and safety. Most directors also reported that accreditation had increased the visibility of their programs. Figure 2-12 contains a list of organizations that have accepted standards for quality practice.

### Summary

Many types of early childhood programs are available. These include family child care homes, child care centers, Montessori schools, Head Start, kindergartens, school-age child care programs, parent cooperatives, laboratory schools, and high school child care programs. Each type of program takes a unique approach to meeting children’s developmental needs.

Programs may be sponsored in a variety of ways. The type of sponsorship may affect goals and philosophies. Programs may be publicly or privately funded. Child care corporations can be privately or publicly held. Employer-sponsored programs are designed to reduce some of the burdens of early care and education for working parents. Employers are using a variety of ways to provide these benefits for their employees.

With the variety of child care programs available, families consider many factors in choosing the best program for their child. Some of the factors that families consider include the type of program, quality of program and staff, adult-child ratio, group size, and condition of facilities. As a teacher, you will need to know what families look for in a program. Then you can strive to make your program one that families choose for their children.

Families may look for programs that have been accredited by NAEYC. Accreditation certifies that a program meets a specific set of standards. Obtaining accreditation involves participation in a self-study, which is designed as an evaluation tool. Center directors, staff, and parents participate in this process. Public recognition of a high level of excellence is one of the main benefits of achieving accreditation.
Review and Reflect

1. In what type of program is child care provided in a private home with a small number of children?
2. What is the difference between the care provided at most child care centers and custodial care?
3. What is Montessori's theory of education?
4. What are “practical life experiences” according to Montessori?
5. Describe the purpose of Head Start.
6. What is the goal of Head Start’s nutrition program?
7. Name the three basic kindergarten schedules.
8. List five objectives for a kindergarten program.
9. Describe how a checking-in service works for school-age children.
10. _____ are formed and run by parents who wish to take part in their children’s preschool experiences.
11. What is the primary purpose of a laboratory school?
12. Publicly sponsored programs are funded by ________.
13. Describe one way employers can provide child care assistance for their employees.
14. For children ages 3 to 5 years, NAEYC recommends the adult-child ratio of one adult for every _____ children.
15. Why might a high staff turnover be a concern to parents?

16. Why might parents want to select an early care and education program that was accredited?

Cross-Curricular Links

17. **Writing.** Arrange a visit to a school-age child care program. Ask to review the curriculum. Write a report on what you learn.
18. **Research, writing.** Using Internet or print resources, research the biography of Maria Montessori. Write a one-page report detailing how Maria Montessori’s early experiences in medicine led her to define a philosophy of early childhood education. Discuss her contribution to the way children are educated today.
19. **Social studies.** Research the political platform of Lyndon Johnson and the part the War on Poverty and Head Start may have played in his successful election. Has the United States government been completely supportive of Head Start since its inception? What changes have been made to the Head Start program through the decades, and what is in store for its future?

Apply and Explore

20. Visit a family child care home. Ask the provider to outline the daily schedule.

Thinking Critically

21. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of teaching in a parent cooperative.
22. Research the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) organization. What are the goals of NAFCC? What eligibility criteria must providers meet? What is the role of an NAFCC Accreditation Observer? Why do people like being an NAFCC Accreditation Observer? Write a summary of your findings.
23. Write an essay outlining the value of center accreditation.
24. Research kindergarten readiness. Some sources contain kindergarten checklists and other information for parents concerning their children’s kindergarten experience. Write a brief article directed to prospective kindergarten parents about what to expect.
25. Privately sponsored child care programs operated by a house of worship may include religious education as part of the curriculum. Describe your feelings about this subject. Should all students enrolled have to take part in the religious curriculum activities the program provides? Write a short essay detailing the advantages and disadvantages of this type of program.

Using Technology

26. Visit the Web site for Effective Parenting to find information for parents on selecting child care.
27. Search the American Montessori Society Web site for a position paper on Montessori schools.
28. Use the Internet to search for licensed and registered child care programs by state, city, and region. Create a database of those in your area.
29. Search the Internet for large companies in the United States that provide some form of employee assistance for child care. What type of assistance is provided? What choices do employees have for child care benefits, if any? What is the percentage of employees who take advantage of these benefits? Use presentation software to present your findings.

Portfolio Project

30. Write a short essay on your vision of a high-quality child care center. Include characteristics of the program you feel would best meet the needs of the children served by the program. These may include facility, curriculum, child-adult ratios, teacher qualifications and training, equipment, and accreditation. (Refer to Figure 2-11). What would encourage parents to enroll their children in this program?