

Contracting with our Program

What is Home Child Care?

Home Child Care is care given in an approved private residence to a maximum of six children. The ages of the children range from infancy to thirteen years.

Child care may be provided during the day, in the evening, on weekends or overnight.

Program & Philosophy Statement

The Region of Waterloo Home Child Care program views children as competent, capable of complex thinking, curious and rich in potential. We strive to ensure all children receive quality child care that promotes healthy, social, emotional, cognitive and physical development. We do this by:

- **Assisting parents in choosing care for their children in a supervised home environment that respects all cultures and family values.**

Established by:

- Valuing diversity and inclusion across the program
- Asking parents questions about values and beliefs
- Sharing information about the caregiver with the parent
- Promoting strong partnerships between the parent and caregiver

- **Supporting and endorsing positive and supportive learning environments in a home based setting which fosters children's exploration, play and inquiry.**

Established by:

- Monthly observations at home visits to caregiver homes
- Providing training opportunities and other resources to consultants and caregivers
- Providing pedagogical leadership to caregivers to arrange their homes as supportive learning environments

- **Encouraging an active partnership between parents, caregivers, children and our program through positive and responsive interactions.**

Established by:

- Promoting collaboration between parents, caregivers, children and consultants
- Promoting collaborative relationships between consultants and caregivers during home visits and other contacts

- Consultants available daily for consultation, developing and maintaining positive working relationships

➤ **Identifying children’s individual needs and strengths and assisting families in accessing community resources.**

Established by:

- Seeking ongoing information from the parent and caregiver
- Daily child observations by caregivers, monthly observations by consultants
- Assisting parents, caregivers and children to access community resources as needed
- Promoting and supporting a scaffolding approach to children’s learning where children become more independent as they develop new skills

➤ **Involving local community partners when appropriate and allow these partners to support children, families and our agency.**

Established by:

- Conducting referrals to other agencies as needed in consultation with the parent and caregiver
- Conducting case conferences to foster support
- Organizing joint events with libraries, community centers and other agencies
- Planning and organizing playgroups to encourage caregiver networking and supportive learning environments

➤ **Encouraging children to interact and communicate in a positive way and supporting their ability to self regulate.**

Established by:

- Consultants and caregivers engaging children in conversations that encourage them to understand their feelings
- Consultants and caregivers engaging children in problem solving
- Sharing resources about positive communication and self-regulation with caregivers, parents and children
- Promoting a safe environment to engage children in reflective learning

➤ **Providing indoor and outdoor play as well as active play, rest and quiet time through a blend of child initiated and adult supported experiences.**

Established by:

- Caregivers utilizing outdoor spaces daily (e.g. backyards, parks, walks, trails)

- Providing a balance of active play, rest and quiet time
- Engaging children in the planning of activities
- Consultants exploring options with caregivers to fully utilize their unique home child care space

➤ **Offering resources and providing consultation to caregivers in child development, behaviour guidance, nutrition, health, safety and other child related topics.**

Established by:

- Consultants reviewing these items with caregivers during monthly visits to their home
- Offering workshops and resources on these topics to both consultants and caregivers
- Referring caregivers, parents and children to other agencies as needed

➤ **Facilitating and encouraging continuous professional learning amongst caregivers and staff.**

Established by:

- Encouraging continuous professional learning for consultants and caregivers, promoting ongoing self reflection
- Providing conferences, workshops and resources for consultants and caregivers

➤ **Seeking ongoing communication with parents about their children and the program, looking to incorporate feedback into future planning.**

Established by:

- Caregivers and consultants communicating with parents on a regular basis regarding their children
- Seeking feedback from parents through conversations and surveys
- Using parent feedback in future planning of the program

➤ **Supporting caregivers to ensure that they continue to meet Home Child Care policies and the Child Care and Early Years Act.**

Established by:

- Ongoing communication between consultants and caregivers to confirm they understand requirements
- Monthly visits to homes to document compliance
- Quarterly house inspections completed to ensure further compliance

- Developing policies that support children, parents and caregivers

Prohibited Practices

The Region of Waterloo wants to ensure children have a safe and positive experience that promotes their healthy growth and development. Consultants will observe caregiver interactions with children ensuring that they align with our program statement and beliefs in adult-child interactions. The following practices are prohibited at all times in our caregiver's homes:

- Corporal punishment of the child.
- Physical restraint of the child, such as confining the child to a high chair, car seat, stroller or other device for the purposes of discipline or in lieu of supervision, unless the physical restraint is for the purpose of preventing a child from hurting him/herself or someone else, and is used only as a last resort and only until the risk of injury is no longer imminent.
- Locking the exits of the home child care premises for the purpose of confining the child, or confining the child in an area or room without adult supervision, unless such confinement occurs during an emergency and is required as part of the licensee's emergency management policies and procedures.
- Use of harsh or degrading measures or threats or use of derogatory language directed at or used in the presence of a child that would humiliate, shame or frighten the child or undermine his or her self-respect, dignity or self-worth.
- Depriving the child of basic needs including food, drink, shelter, sleep, toilet use, clothing or bedding.
- Inflicting any bodily harm on children including making children eat or drink against their will.

Building and Maintaining Positive Relationships with Parents

An important part of your work with parents is building and maintaining positive relationships with parents. Being able to communicate effectively with parents and work together with them will have a strong influence on their peace of mind and your satisfaction as a caregiver.

Most importantly, the children benefit when the people who care for them also have a good relationship.

The "getting to know you stage" is the most important stage in the parent-caregiver relationship. It sets the foundation for how you will work together in the future.

Let's Start Care!

When a child begins using care in your home, parents will be looking to you for reassurance that their child is adjusting to the new environment.

Here are some helpful suggestions for caregivers:

- ✓ **Be accepting and non-judgmental.** The emotional impact of leaving your child with a new caregiver (especially for the first time child care user) can be very traumatic. You may see parents behaving in a way that is not normal for them (peeking in the windows, calling you every 20 minutes). Be patient and understanding - this will pass.
- ✓ **Be honest about how the child is adjusting.** For example, "The baby was crying off and on today but that often happens at this stage. I'm sure he will settle in. I'm trying to keep him with me or in the carrier close to me" or "He had a great day today. He settled in only ten minutes after you left."
- ✓ **Offer reassurances** about how you are going to handle any challenges and discuss them with the parent.
- ✓ **Share any information** with the parents on what their child is doing throughout the day. For example, "Michelle participated actively in craft time this morning. I think she's starting to feel comfortable here."
- ✓ **Smile and be positive.** Tell them what is going well, listen to their concerns, and work together to help the child make the adjustment to his new environment.



As Care Continues

As care continues, there are strategies that will build on the trust and confidence parents have developed in your care.

Communicating with parents daily helps you both provide the best care possible for the child. Take the time to share a few words with parents at the beginning of each day. Insist that parents accompany their child into your home at drop-off and pick-up times. Keep each other well informed about the child's health, routines and any important events coming up.

At pick-up time, talk to parents about their child's day. Explain about the fun activities or new things learned. Encourage children to talk about their activities or explain a creative project.

1. Find good things to tell parents about their child. Be specific when offering positive comments. For example, "Michael picked up all the blocks at clean up time today."
2. Ask parents for advice and act on their desires: "Is there anything special you want me to do with Jamie today?"
3. Be sensitive when the child is within hearing range of your conversation with parents. If you need more time to talk things over, arrange a time to call the parent when you are both free.
4. Provide parents with a written daily information sheet or a small journal for infants and toddlers regarding their feeding and toileting routines.

5. Some caregivers make a notebook available for written notes between the caregiver and the parent.
6. Use a bulletin board at the front entrance specifically for your families. You can use it to post necessary items for the program as well as announcements, your daily schedule or current activities. You could also post pictures of the children involved in various activities during the day! Parents love to see pictures of their children enjoying themselves in your care.
7. Advise parents about any changes in the home that may affect the child, such as a new child being accepted into care.
8. Before planning a special activity (like going to the library), discuss it with the parents. They may have been planning to do the same activity with the child.
9. Empathy, understanding, mutual respect, and your shared interest and concern for the child are truly the foundation of a strong, long lasting, quality home childcare experience.

Speak to your Home Child Care consultant for additional strategies to assist you in building a positive relationship with parents.

Commonly Asked Questions

What will a consultant do for me?

The Ontario Early Years Act determines a Home Child Care consultant's responsibilities. Your consultant will:

- Visit your home at least once a month - sometimes more if you need the support
- Conduct scheduled and unscheduled visits
- Observe the children's development and behaviour
- Assess each child's development
- Provide you with useful resources
- Discuss any concerns that you may have about child care
- Arrange events such as playgroups, outdoor play days and events in your neighbourhood
- Perform a safety check of your home every 3 months



If your consultant is not available and you have a problem that you would like to discuss immediately, please ask to speak to one of the supervisors, the manager of Home Child Care or another Home Child Care consultant.

We are here to support you!

How many children can I care for?

A caregiver may care for a maximum of six children under 13 years old, including the caregiver's own children under 4 years old. Of these six children, no more than three children can be under the age of 2 years old.

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When determining the number of children that a caregiver may have in their care, the following is taken into consideration:

- The ages of the caregiver's own children and the other children in the group
- The size and layout of the house
- The unique needs of the children
- The caregiver's experience and insurance policy

The home child care consultant and supervisor will determine the number of children a caregiver is able to care for. This may not always be the maximum allowed number.

How are children referred to my home?

When a family needs child care in your area, your consultant will contact each available caregiver before referring the family.

The consultant will discuss the needs of the family with you before giving your name to a parent. The needs of the children, the hours that the parent requires care and the spaces available in the caregiver's home are evaluated.

The parent is given the names of any Caregivers who agree to interview. After the Home Child Care consultant has recommended your home to a parent, you should receive a phone call from the parent asking to meet with you for an interview.

Parents choose what caregivers they will interview and are encouraged to evaluate your home based on any training you have taken, the activities that you participate in, experience and the general suitability of your home.

It is important to choose an interview time that is convenient for you and your family. Interviews should be done when you have no other children in care. This will allow you to give the parent and the child your full attention.

Remember, this will be a mutual interview. In many cases, it is the first time the parent will have left her child with anyone other than family or close friends.

This meeting is very important to both of you. This is a good opportunity for you to show the parent around your home, to talk about where the child will sleep, where he will play and what he will play with.

If you have some appropriate toys in view, pay special attention to the child and if you take time to reassure the parent about your abilities to do child care, the first step in building a good relationship will have begun.

By the end of this visit you should have a good feeling about how the child will fit into your home.

It will always be your choice to decide to provide child care for a family. You will want to consider many things before you decide.

- Will this child or these children fit with the ages of your own, and the other children in your home?
- Will you be able to work well with the parents?
- Are the hours of care compatible with your own family's schedule?

When you have made a decision, contact your Home Child Care consultant.

What should I talk about at the interview?

The child of course! Ask about:

- personality
- allergies, health
- likes and dislikes
- school, teacher, friends
- the child's usual daily routine
- your routine



Daily program and tour of the home - Parents will want to know how their children will spend their day, where the child will rest/sleep and what activities & outings they will participate in. This is an opportunity to show your menu as well.

Outdoor play - Show the parent where the children will play. Discuss age appropriate supervision.

Guiding children's behaviour - Talk to the parents about the expectations in your home and your philosophy of behaviour management.

Care of a sick child - Review expectations about caring for ill children, Home Child Care Policy and administering prescription medications.

Parent's schedule

- Confirm hours of work/school
- Confirm time of arrival and pick up
- Overtime - Discuss how you handle this issue in your business. Do you expect a phone call if parents are late? Do you charge for overtime?

Special Arrangements

- ☐ Vacations - Talk about when you will be going away.
- ☐ PD Days - Ask for a schedule

Communication - Discuss care with parent(s) - agree on a convenient time to discuss your care with the parent(s) on a regular basis. Communication is the most important factor when developing a relationship with the family. Parents appreciate ongoing communication on how their child is doing in care.

Attendance Sheets - Signing of attendance sheets. Remind parent that she must sign your attendance sheet at the end of each month. Discuss arrangements for payment of "parent contribution" if there is one.

What is needed before care can begin?

1. Child Intake Package – your consultant will have completed a package with the parent for each child needing care. This package includes:
 - Parent contact information
 - Allergies or medications
 - Emergency contact people
 - Immunizations (if the child is not in school)
 - Child Profile – personal information about the child
 - Outdoor Supervision – this states where the child can play outside unsupervised (children over 5yrs) in agreement with you, your consultant and the parent

Care cannot start unless this package is complete and in your possession. It is your responsibility to keep it electronically on a device for quick access, or you can choose to print it off and have a paper copy.

2. Private children – you are required to have the same paperwork (as well as immunizations if the child is not in school) as children placed through the Region of Waterloo before care can begin. Forms that can be used are found on our website: <https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/region-of-waterloo-home-child-care.aspx>
Look for “Resources For Caregivers” – *Sample Forms for Privately Placed Children*



Am I able to care for children who are not in the Home Child Care program?

You may contract to care for children "privately" while also caring for children through the Home Child Care program. All children being cared for in your home must be included in the overall count when determining your maximum home capacity.

The Ontario Early Years Act requires that you keep a record of immunization for each private child in your home as well as necessary paperwork in compliance with the Act.

What are the ages of children that I will be looking after?

There are a number of factors to be considered, including the ages of your own children and the ages of the children who need care.

In order to provide quality childcare, it is important that you enjoy the ages and stages of development of the children in your care!



How long will the children stay with me?

Many children stay in a caregiver's home for a long time. Others will leave for a variety of reasons: parent's job or school changes, parent moves, child starts school or possibly the child just does not seem happy in your home.

The decision to transfer a child from your home to another home can be made by the parent, by you the caregiver, or by the Home Child Care consultant.

We prefer to make this decision a mutual one. Our aim is to provide the best possible placement for the child.

Parents and/or Home Child Care staff will, whenever possible, give caregivers a minimum of two weeks notice when a child is leaving the caregiver's care.

Does Home Child Care provide me with equipment for the children?

No. As an independent contractor it is your responsibility to equip your business operation appropriately. Most business costs are tax deductible and it is the caregiver's responsibility to keep receipts and claim on taxes each year.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/businesses/topics/daycare-your-home.html>



How long will I be a caregiver?

This depends on the demand for child care in your area and your continued interest in being a caregiver. The agency is obligated to terminate a caregiver's agreement if the regulations of the Ontario Early Years Act are violated.

There may also be times when the demand for child care in your area decreases. If you have not cared for children on a regular basis for three months, your consultant will discuss with you next steps and possibly close your file.

If the demand for child care in your area increases, you may re-apply to the Home Child Care program.

How do I handle my personal appointments during my child care hours?

Caregivers are encouraged to make personal appointments at times when children are not in their care. On the rare occasion when this is not possible, please contact your consultant for assistance in finding alternate care.

IMPORTANT REMINDER: Caregivers are solely responsible for the children placed with them. The only time that children may be left with an adult who is not a contracted caregiver is in an emergency. The Home Child Care office or your consultant must be advised as soon as possible if this occurs.

What activities in my community can I participate in during child care hours?

Caregivers and the children in their care are encouraged to participate in community programs such as neighbourhood groups, parent/child resource centres, library programs and other child focused programs.

Activities that are primarily of interest to the caregiver such as a fitness class for the caregiver should be scheduled after child care hours.



What should I do when I want to go on a vacation?

When you are planning vacation time, please contact your Home Child Care consultant. If you talk about your holiday plans with the parents of the children in your care, they may be able to coordinate their holiday plans with yours. Otherwise, the Home Child Care consultant will contact the parents and arrange for care of the children during the time you are away.

What should I do if I have a personal emergency or family sickness and cannot provide child care?

1. If you know you will be unavailable before the children arrive:

Call the parents as soon as possible and let them know how long you will be unavailable. Notify your consultant with this information. If the parents are unable to make their own private alternate child care arrangements, they should contact the consultant who will try to find an alternate caregiver.

Many parents will have an emergency back-up arrangement (a friend or relative willing to do temporary care) for these occasional situations. Parents and caregivers must remember that Home Child Care can only pay Regional caregivers to do child care.

2. If a crisis occurs during the day:

If you are unable to continue caring for children (i.e. you or someone in your home becomes extremely ill, or you have a family emergency), call the home child care office for assistance. If the consultant is not immediately available ask for the supervisor, the manager or another consultant. The staff will gladly assist you.

****Note:** If the emergency is a serious occurrence involving the Home Child Care children, please follow the guidelines in the Accidents, Serious Occurrences and Child Protection Issues section of this manual.

What are my insurance requirements?

As stated on the Agreement to Provide Child Care, all people under contract with the Region's Home Child Care program must purchase their own liability insurance. A copy of the policy must be shared with your consultant, or have your insurance company complete our "Confirmation of Liability Form" (ask your consultant for this form).

The Region's insurance does not adequately protect the caregiver in the event of a claim.

Caregiver insurance policies should state:

- 2 Million personal liability
- Your home is covered for home child care
- Your insurance policy states how many children you can care for (max. 6)

What is a Ministry "Spot Check"?

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As part of the annual licensing review for Home Child Care, the Ministry is required to "spot check" a number of caregiver homes. The Ministry Program Advisor will come to your home accompanied by your home child care consultant.

The purpose of the "spot check" is to ensure the Ministry that the regulations for Home Child Care (Ontario Early Years Act) are being followed.

The Ministry consultant will ask questions about the families you care for, behaviour management practices, sanitary practices and other child care issues.

You will be asked to show your paperwork for all children in your care as well as a tour of your home.

What opportunities for my personal growth and development are available through the Home Child Care program?

Home child caregivers are encouraged to take advantage of workshops and educational opportunities in their own communities.

In addition, the Home Child Care program hosts an annual one day conference and periodic workshops that are directed at the special interests of the caregiver group.



What about First Aid Training?

Caregivers must keep their STANDARD FIRST AID + CPR certification current through courses offered in the community.

How should I keep the parent informed about their child's care?

Maintaining a good relationship with the parent is extremely important for good communication. A friendly word at the end of the day highlighting the positive things that the child has done is very important.

Occasionally, you may want to invite the parent to stay for a short visit to discuss the child care arrangement. Communication by telephone is also helpful. All of these ways will help build and maintain that very important relationship with the parent of the child in your care.



Sending a text with a picture of the child doing an activity or just a big smile will brighten up any parent's day!

Will I still be a caregiver if I move?

Please let the Home Child Care consultant know as soon as possible if you plan to move. Your contract is valid only at your current address.

If you move, your Contract Agreement will end on the last day that you are available to do care at your old location.

You will receive a letter letting you know that your agreement has ended and you will also receive a checklist reminding you about the steps you will need to take to provide care at your new location.

The demand for home child care varies from neighborhood to neighborhood. If there is a demand for home child care in your new area and if your agreement is in good standing, the Region will normally enter into a contract with you at your new location.

You should expect to be inactive for 1 – 2 weeks after your move while all parts of your contract are brought up to date.

Before you may begin providing child care through the Region, you will need:

- ✓ A home safety inspection completed by a home child care consultant. All elements of the inspection must be in place ready for care

- ✓ Confirmation of liability insurance with your new address
- ✓ Criminal reference check, Family and Children's Services file check and up to date immunizations for any new residents
- ✓ All elements of your contract up to date – immunization records for all residents, rabies shots for pets, first aid training, etc.

A new contract with your new address will then be signed by you and the Home Child Care program.

For more information, please refer to the below check list and contact your Home Child Care consultant, supervisor, or manager.



Caregiver change of address checklist

As soon as possible, please:

- Notify your Home Child Care consultant of the date of your move, your new address, and the last day you will be available at your old address. Your consultant will notify the consultant in your new area (if applicable).
- Notify the parents of the last day you will be available to provide care at your old address.
- Notify your Home Child Care consultant if when you move you also change your banking. We need this information for your monthly deposit.

Before you provide care at your new address, you will need:

- A successful home safety inspection completed by you and the Home Child Care consultant.
- All elements of the home safety inspection must be in place before a contract can be signed. Please refer to the "Quarterly Home Safety Checklist", and the "Fire Safety Requirements" - or speak to a Home Child Care consultant for more information.