

Parent Guide to Licensed Quality Child Care in Waterloo Region



Find and apply for licensed
child care programs near you at
onelistwaterlooregion.ca





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Step 1

Understanding child care in Waterloo Region

About this Guide

As a parent, you want the very best for your child. Searching for child care can feel overwhelming, but this guide has everything you need to know about finding the right program for you and your child.

Types of care

There are different types of child care available in Waterloo Region.

Programs can be licensed or unlicensed. Options include centre-based or home-based child care. Child care programs are also available for school-age children before and after school.

Licensed child care

Licensed child care programs must meet provincial standards for health, safety and supporting the developmental needs of children (as outlined in the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014). These programs are monitored and inspected for compliance by the [Ministry of Education](#)¹. Licensed programs have a green sign prominently displayed near the entrance of their centre or home.

Licensed child care operators and licensed school boards participating in Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) program offer reduced fees to families with children under six years of age. You can find CWELCC participating programs by using the filter in [OneList](#)².

Unlicensed child care

Unlicensed child care programs are not inspected by the Ministry of Education unless they receive a [complaint](#)³ and are not required to follow the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014. Unlicensed care could include unlicensed home child care providers, a nanny, or a relative. Care is often provided in the caregivers home, but may be provided in your home.





Before and After School Programs

Licensed Before and After School Programs are available in most schools for children in Kindergarten to Grade 6. These programs are sometimes called Extended Day Programs and/or Youth Development Programs (grade 3-6 only). For a complete list of before and after school options, including locations and who operates the program, go to [OneList Waterloo Region](#)².

Depending who operates the program, there are different policies and procedures related to the registration and enrollment process. Each operator of these programs will have different hours of operation, policies and procedures related to changing your schedule, billing, cost of care, and notice of registration, withdrawal/end care. For the most up to date information, please contact the Licensed Child Care Provider or School Board.

	Licensed centre-based care	Licensed home-based care	Unlicensed home-based care
Licensed by Ministry of Education	Yes	Yes, under the Home Child Care Agency, not the individual provider	No. They must disclose that they are not licensed
Who operates	Non-profit and for-profit organizations	Non-profit organizations and the Municipality	A relative, babysitter, or nanny
How is care provided	Age-specific groups (Infants/toddlers/preschoolers)	Small group (not age-specific) (Maximum of 6)	Small group (not age-specific) (Maximum of 5)
Ages of children cared for	0-12 years*	0-12 years*	0-12 years*
Hours of operation	Monday to Friday 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.*	7 days/week 24 hours/day*	7 days/week 24 hours/day*
Fee subsidy available	Yes	Yes	No
Special needs resources available	Yes	Yes	No
Staff qualifications	Programs must all employ Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) as per the CCEYA. The percentage of RECE's varies from program to program	Home child care providers have various educational backgrounds that are approved by a licensed home child care agency Licensed home child care agencies have consultants who are RECE's, who offer support to providers	Unknown
Vulnerable Sector Checks	Required by all staff	Caregivers have current checks for all family members over 18	Unknown
How to apply	OneList Waterloo Region	OneList Waterloo Region	Directly with the provider

*Ages of children cared for, hours of operation, and group sizes may vary across programs and providers.

Visit Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) for a list of licensed child care agencies in Waterloo Region participating in the program and offering reduced rates.

Step 2

Choosing a program

Things to consider

When choosing a program for your child, there are many things to consider.



Location



Program philosophy/
approach to learning



Cultural fit



Cost (for more information
see “child care costs”)



Program policies



Qualifications/training
of educators/caregivers



Hours of operation



Group sizes



Rate of Educator turnover

It is recommended that you call the centre and book a visit so you can observe and [ask questions](#)⁴.

- Is the centre/home welcoming, clean and well maintained?
- Is there an atmosphere of warmth and respect?
- Are the educators/caregivers responsive to the needs of the children?
- Are there a range of cultures and backgrounds among the staff?
- Are the indoor and outdoor environments well equipped?
- Does the environment allow children to investigate, imagine, think, create and solve problems?
- Are the children actively engaged in learning through play?
- Are there toys and learning materials that will engage your child?
- Does the centre hire only RECEs, or do they also employ untrained staff?
How many RECEs per classroom?
- How long have staff been employed at the centre?
- Does the menu offer a variety of nutritious and culturally inclusive food options each day?
- Does the program have policies that reinforce equity of access and inclusion for all children?

While visiting the centre you can ask to see their latest Licensing Inspection by the Ministry of Education. You can also go on-line and check the centres most recent [Public Health Inspection](#)⁵.

Quality matters!

High quality Early Years programs play an important role in healthy child development and improving quality of life for families. Licensed Child Care operators are working with Region of Waterloo to keep improving the quality of their services. The ongoing focus on improving program quality is supported by the Region of Waterloo’s Quality Initiatives team and Conestoga College’s Professional Resource Centre. Each year all Licensed Child Care programs follow a continuous quality improvement cycle called [Early Years Engage](#)⁶. The annual cycle starts by gathering information to reflect on areas that are working well and identify areas that need improvement. Next, the Licensed Child Care programs each make commitments to work on concrete changes that to improve experiences, relationships, and environments that benefit children and families, leading to a higher quality of life. Early Years Engage is built on The Ministry of Education’s resource guide: [How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years](#)⁷. This guide supports educators to look at the what they do every day and understand how their actions have an impact on children and their families in six key areas:

1. Establishing positive, responsive adult-child relationships;
2. Providing inclusive learning environments and experiences that encourage exploration, play, and inquiry;
3. Engaging children as co-learners along with families/caregivers, and others;
4. Planning and creating environments as a “third teacher”;
5. Using documentation to make the children’s thinking and the learning visible; and
6. Participating in ongoing reflective practice and collaborative inquiry with others.

Support for Black, Indigenous and/or Racialized Families

If you need help accessing early years services, such as applying for child care, child care subsidy, or special needs supports, reach out to an Early Years Navigator today to assist and provide support in accessing these services in Waterloo Region.

[Early Years Navigators](#)⁸ are available to support equity deserving families including Black, Indigenous and others who experience barriers accessing Early Years Child Care services. They can provide information about the Child Care options available, help you to set up an account on OneList and apply to licensed child care programs, provide information about child care subsidy and help you access other community resources including EarlyON drop in centres, Special Needs Resourcing support, Public Health and other community services. Find out more about [Early Years Navigators](#)⁸.



Step 3

Applying for licensed child care and before and after school care

OneList

[OneList Waterloo Region](#)² is a web-based program, where parents/guardians apply for licensed child care in Waterloo Region (including centre-based, home-based, and before and after school programs).

- If you do not have access to a computer or mobile device (e.g. cell phone, tablet), you can visit a library, a community centre or the Welcome Space at a Region of Waterloo building, (20 Weber St. E., Kitchener, 99 Regina St. S., Waterloo, or 150 Main St., Cambridge) to use a computer.
- Licensed Child Care Operators receive the applications and they continue with the registration and enrollment process, when they have a space for your child.

Steps to apply for child care on OneList:

- Go to onelistwaterlooregion.ca
- Create an account by registering using a personal email address and creating a password and follow the steps to search and find the programs that you would like to apply to.

Looking for a licensed child care centre?

- Choose Waterloo Region Licensed Child Care (then Centre-based) Looking for Licensed home child care?
- Choose Waterloo Region Licensed Child Care (then Home-based) Looking for before and/or after school care?
- Click the link under “Looking for Before and After School Programs?” to see a listing of all the schools and who operates the school age program at each school.
- Choose the corresponding, colour-coded button to start the registration process.
- Keep your account up to date by logging in at least every 60 days. OneList accounts with no activity after 60 days receive an email to notify them of the need to log in to keep their account active.
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)⁹ about OneList

Step 4

After you have applied for child care

Waitlists

Every child care program manages their own waitlist. Your position on their waitlist is based on several factors, such as:

- Your application date
- Your child's age
- Days / hours of care required
- Programs may give priority to applications when (but not limited to):
 - ▶ A sibling is already enrolled
 - ▶ The applicant is a staff member
 - ▶ The family has been approved for child care subsidy
 - ▶ There is an agreement with an organization or learning institution to reserve child care spaces for their staff or students

OneList does not provide information about waitlist times, space availability or vacancies. To inquire about where your child is on a waitlist or when a space may be available, contact the programs directly.

If you no longer require care, please go into your account and remove your applications.

Being offered a child care space

When there is a space available for your child at a program that you have applied to, the program will contact you to offer you the spot. Typically, programs need a response within 24 to 48 hours of making an offer, so be sure to check your email regularly.

Once you have accepted a space, the program will require you to complete a registration package. Some programs may charge a registration fee or deposit, which may or may not be refundable.

When you apply to programs through OneList, you need to prioritize your top three applications. When you accept a space at a program, applications ranked below the one you accepted are removed from your account. Programs prioritized higher than the program you accepted, will remain on your account.

Child care costs

Child care fees vary from program to program and are based on the age of the child and sometimes, on the number of hours they attend.

With the introduction of the Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care (CWELCC) program, families with children under six years of age enrolled in a child care program participating in CWELCC will receive a significant reduction to their child care fees. Daily fees will be reduced to an average of \$10/day by 2025/2026. You can find CWELCC participating programs by using the filter in [OneList](#)².

Contact the child care centre, the home child care agency, or school board (or visit their website) for specific details on fees. In addition to the monthly fees, some programs may charge other fees, so it is important to ask about this ahead of time.

Additional help paying for child care

In addition to reduced fees through the [CWELCC program](#)¹⁰, some families are also eligible for further financial support to help pay for child care. The Region of Waterloo, Child Care Subsidy program helps parents pay for licensed child care so they can go to work or school. Child Care Subsidy may cover all or part of a family's child care costs.

To learn more about Child Care Subsidy, visit the [Child Care Subsidy website](#)¹¹ or call 519-575-4400. You can also use the [online calculator](#)¹².

Parents can apply for Child Care Subsidy online or over the phone by calling 519-575-4400. You can apply for Child Care Subsidy up to **26 weeks** before starting care. Since wait times for licensed care may be longer than 26 weeks, you can apply for licensed care before submitting an application for Child Care Subsidy.



Did you know?

You can also claim the Ontario Childcare Tax Credit on your tax return to cover the cost of child care in centres, homes, and camps. For more information, visit ontario.ca/page/ontario-child-care-tax-credit¹¹



Questions or concerns about your child's care?

Licensed child care

The first step is to talk to your child care educator/provider.

If they cannot resolve your issue, speak with the centre supervisor / home child care consultant.

If you still cannot resolve the issue, you may file a complaint with the [Ministry of Education](#)³:

- Licensed care, call 1-877-510-5333 or email childcare_ontario@ontario.ca
- Unlicensed care, call 1-844-516-6263 or email UCCV@Ontario.ca

You can also share your concern/complaint with the Region of Waterloo Children's Services by calling 519-575-4400.

Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) Licensed Before/After School Programs

For more information or questions (regarding Parent Handbook, policies, billing inquiries, tax receipts or schedule changes)

Email: care@wrdsb.ca

Phone: Extended Day Information Line at 519-570-0003 ext. 4704

Website: [WRDSB Extended Day](#)¹³

Waterloo Catholic District School Board (WCDSB) Licensed Before/After School Programs

Please direct your questions or concerns to the Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) in the Extended Day Program.

For more information or questions (regarding Parent Handbook, policies, billing inquiries, tax receipts, schedules etc.)

Email: extended.day@wcdsb.ca

Phone: 519-578-3660

Website: [WCDSB Extended Day](#)¹⁴

Special needs supports

If you have concerns about your child's development, call the Special Needs Access Point (SNAP) at 519-514-SNAP, visit the [Special Needs Access Point website](#)¹⁵, or email: snap@kwhab.ca.

SNAP is a single point of access for referrals to services and supports for children 0-12 years of age who are attending or planning to attend licensed child care program or Before or After School Program within Waterloo Region (except School Board operated programs). The SNAP Resource Coordinator will contact you to discuss your concerns and explain what supports are available to help your child.

Additional resources

1. Ministry of Education
ontario.ca/page/child-care-rules-child-care-and-early-years-act
2. OneList Waterloo Region
regionofwaterloo.onehsn.com
3. Ministry of Education, complaints about child care
ontario.ca/page/make-child-care-complaint
4. Questions to ask a Child Care Provider
ontario.ca/page/questions-ask-child-care-provider
5. Public Health Inspections
checkit.regionofwaterloo.ca/Home/About?returnUrl=~%2FSearch%2FByTable
6. Early Years Engage, a quality initiative, through the Region of Waterloo, to support child care operators in continuous quality improvement
regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/quality-improvement.aspx
7. The Ministry of Education resource guide:
How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years
files.ontario.ca/edu-how-does-learning-happen-en-2021-03-23.pdf
8. Early Learning and Child Care Navigators, EarlyON Child and Family Centre
earlyyearsinfo.ca
9. Frequently Asked Questions about OneList
regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/resources/Childrens-Services/DOCS_ADMIN-2211322-v8-OneList_FAQ_for_Parents.pdf
10. Canada Wide Early Learning and Child Care Program
regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/national-child-care.aspx
11. Region of Waterloo, Child Care Subsidy website
regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/help-paying-for-child-care.aspx#
12. Region of Waterloo, fee subsidy calculator
regionofwaterloo.ca/en/living-here/child-care-subsidy-calculator.aspx
13. Waterloo Region District School Board (WRDSB) Extended Day Program
wrdsb.ca/beforeafter/
14. Waterloo Catholic District School Board (WCDSB) Extended Day Program
wcdsb.ca/our-schools/register-for-school/extended-day-program/
15. Special Needs Access Point (SNAP)
snrcwaterlooregion.ca/snap