



*“Families understand their own child care needs. This checklist can help you select a child care setting that is most suitable for you and your child. It is helpful to visit several different programs to compare options.”*

## Call the Child Care Switchboard

in Santa Cruz County at

(831) 466-5820


(831) 763-8725

[www.cdrc4info.org](http://www.cdrc4info.org)

CDRC is funded by:

- California Department of Education
- County of Santa Cruz, and Cities of Capitola, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley and Watsonville
- Santa Cruz County Human Resources Agency
- Foundations, Private Donations and other funding sources

The CDRC designs policies to promote parent and child care provider confidence. If you feel you have been treated unjustly or in an unprofessional manner, please be advised that you have the right to lodge a formal complaint regarding an employee by contacting the Director of the CDRC at: **(831) 466-5821**, or by writing to **Santa Cruz County Office of Education, 400 Encinal Street, Santa Cruz, CA 95060, Attn: CDRC Director.**

 Santa Cruz County  
Office of Education  
MICHAEL C. WATKINS, SUPERINTENDENT  
400 Encinal Street • Santa Cruz, CA 95060

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# Choosing Child Care

Child Care Switchboard in Santa Cruz County

(831) 466-5820

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Child Development Resource Center

## 1. Learn about the Services and Policies

- Determine the services provided.**  
Ask about the days/hours of operation, the daily routine, and the fee schedule.
- Ask to see the license.**  
Note if the license is current and how many children can be cared for at one time. Ask to see copies of any licensing citations or complaints.
- Review the parent handbook and contract.**  
Find out about the policies regarding children's illness, discipline, parental involvement, and vacation days.

## 2. Observe the Program and Ask Questions

- Check for a safe and nurturing environment.**  
Look for children's play areas that are free from hazards, protected stairways, and an enclosed yard. Look for appropriate areas where meals are eaten, naps are taken and diapers are changed. Ask who is certified in Pediatric CPR.
- Count the number of children/adults.**  
Check whether there are enough adults to meet your child's needs as well as the licensing requirements.
- Meet the caregiver(s) who will be with your child.**  
Discuss their education, training and experience. Look for warm, caring interactions between caregivers and children.
- Imagine your child in the environment.**  
Look for areas set up appropriately for the developmental stage of your child. Check for a variety of play materials and equipment and for sufficient space indoors and out for quiet and active play. Observe whether your child could be accommodated if he/she has special needs. Look for books, posters, and other materials that reflect your culture.
- Observe the children.**  
Listen for happy, busy sounds of children engaged in interesting activities. Notice if the children seem at ease with each other and the adults.

## 3. Make Your Decision

- Ask for references.**  
Call other families and discuss what they like about the program, or if you have any questions, talk to parents at the program site.
- Check the licensing complaint history.**  
Call Community Care Licensing at (408) 324-2148 for information about licensed family child care homes and licensed child care centers.
- Consider your instincts.**  
Does the program seem reliable, convenient, affordable? Would you feel comfortable knowing your child is at this home/center while you are away?

## 4. Evaluate

- After enrolling your child, continue to evaluate your decision.**  
Make an unannounced visit during the day. Communicate regularly with your child's caregiver(s). Continue to talk to other parents about the program. Get involved (e.g., field trips, spend time in the classroom.)
- Call the CDRC Child Care Switchboard for further assistance.**  
Evaluate after your child has been in a program 4-8 weeks. You may decide to begin this process again after evaluating, or if your needs change.

