

Non-Traditional Hours Child Care

Most child care programs operate Monday through Friday during typical business hours. These child care programs work well for families who work regular day shift hours. However, there are many families who need child care during **non-traditional hours**.

Finding child care for non-traditional hours

It may or may not be difficult to find child care during non-traditional hours. For example, finding child care that opens at 6 am could be an easy task in an area with a lot of child care programs available. Finding child care for overnight shifts or weekend hours, however, can be more difficult.

Your local Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) agency is the place to start when looking for any type of child care. They can do a search to see if there are child care programs near you that meet the scheduling and other needs of your family. [Search for your local CCR&R here.](#)

If you work with your local CCR&R and are unable to find licensed child care that is open and available when you need it, it may be time to consider other options. One such option is unlicensed child care based in your own home or the caregiver's home. This type of care could be provided by a family member, friend, neighbor or nanny. [Read about finding and selecting a safe and quality unlicensed child care provider here.](#)

Choosing safe and quality child care for non-traditional hours

Some families may need child care for an extra 30 minutes before or after regular business hours. Other families may need longer hours of care on the weekends or during overnight shifts. Regardless of the amount of time a child spends in care during non-traditional hours, it is important to choose a child care provider that you feel safe and comfortable using.

In addition to [considerations that would apply to any child care provider](#), think about and ask the following things related to non-traditional hours child care:

- Plan to tour the program at a time when your child would be present. Ask to meet the staff that would be caring for your child. It is important to see the environment in person to decide if your child could be comfortable there during that time.
- Ask about the schedule and activities when your child would be in care. For example, if your child would be in care on weekends, does the provider offer curriculum and planned activities on those days?
- Confirm what meals and snacks are served while your child would be present and whether you would need to provide any food or drinks.

Non-traditional hours include:



Early Mornings



Evenings



Overnights



Weekends



- Ask if your child will be taken off site at any time while in care (e.g., to run errands, to attend religious services, to visit friends or family, etc.). Make sure that you are comfortable with any of the activities that might take place or the people your child would see.
 - Ask whether you would be notified of off-site activities ahead of time.
 - Ask what type of transportation would be used. If the provider would transport your child, ask about car seats and seat belts, drivers, and the number of adults and children in the vehicle. If the provider would use public transportation, ask how they would keep your child safe on the bus, train, etc.

Questions for early morning care:



- If your child arrives early and is not able to go back to sleep, what activities are available to help them rest or play quietly? (e.g., soft music, books to read or listen to, coloring pages, puzzles, or other quiet activities)
 - Specifically consider whether screen time is ever offered to children who are unable to sleep and whether you would be ok with your child being offered screen time on a tv, tablet or other device.
- Ask about morning routines like breakfast, changing clothes and brushing teeth.
- If your child will go from child care to school, ask about transportation (see above).
 - If your child would take the bus, ask how they will get to the bus stop and whether someone will wait with them until the bus comes.

Questions for evening and/or overnight care:



- If your child would be in care at bedtime, ask about how baths or showers, changing clothes, evening snacks, brushing teeth and other nightly routines are handled.
- Is there a set bedtime for all children, or does a child's bedtime vary based on schedule, family preference or child's age?

Questions for care during any sleeping hours:



- Be sure to verify that an adult will be awake and actively supervising children even while children are asleep. Your child's safety should be a priority.**
- Ask about the sleeping or resting arrangements.
 - Would your child have their own assigned bed, cot, mat or crib that meets safe sleep standards for infants or young children?
 - Do families need to provide their child's bedding?
 - Are children separated by gender while sleeping, or are they all together?
- If children are dropped off or picked up while other children are asleep, how is this handled to ensure the safety of all children and to help sleeping children stay asleep?