



YMCA IN THE NEWS

August 2011

FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT™
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

FOUNDATIONS FOR LIFELONG SUCCESS

CHILD DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS YMCA OF GREATER HARTFORD

Back to school time is a great time to explore child care options and to make sure you're getting the best care possible for your children. The right kind of care can set the foundation for a lifetime of learning, whether you choose a traditional child care center, in-home or family care.

The YMCA of Greater Hartford, the region's largest childcare provider, encourages you take the following under consideration when evaluating your options:

Important social skills come from group experiences. Children should be exposed to a variety of activities. Whether it's a group art project, a sport activity, or just playing house, playing together teaches children to work cooperatively—a skill that a child takes to school and beyond. A jam packed schedule isn't necessary. Just like adults, children need time to relax and daydream, too!

Look for a facility that is spacious enough for children to work and play without crowding, organized with plenty of inviting areas to stimulate children's exploration and involvement. Make sure there is also a safe outdoor play area. A good rule of thumb is that children—especially school aged ones—should be outside for thirty minutes for each three hours spent at the program.

The same principles that apply to keeping a safe home also apply to keeping a safe child care facility. At home, safe, age appropriate toys and equipment are available for play and sleep, healthy meals and snacks are on the menu, and hazards are kept out of reach of little ones. Strangers don't enter the door, and adults are prepared for emergencies.

If you're not sure where to begin, the United Way of Connecticut offers 211 Child Care, a confidential and free child care referral telephone service in Connecticut. 211 Child Care maintains current listings of all state licensed child care centers and family child care homes, as well as listings for nanny agencies, nursery schools, play groups and summer camp programs in Connecticut. (Visit www.211childcare.org or dial 211).

While there are no laws on the books in Connecticut that dictate how old a child must be before he or she can be left unsupervised, the Connecticut Department of Children and Family Services suggests that a child be at least 12 before he is left alone, and at least 15 before he can care for a younger brother or sister.



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The YMCA encourages all family to think "quality first" when evaluating possible caregivers, not cost. Nearly 10,000 children in our state receive some sort of financial assistance for care. Among the agencies providing financial assistance is the Connecticut Care 4 Kids program, which helps families pay their child care costs to help parents stay employed. It also helps families on Temporary Family Assistance who are working or learning skills to obtain employment.

The YMCA of Greater Hartford strives to serve everyone regardless of their ability to pay. Financial assistance is available for those who qualify thanks to our generous donors to the YMCA Strong Kids Annual Fund, which raises money to provide financial scholarship to those in need. For more information, contact your [LOCAL YMCA](#) or visit www.ct.gov/dss and view resources for families with children.