



# Victim Services of Waterloo Region

## Fact Sheet on Child Care

### The Importance of Good Childcare

As a parent, knowing that your child is safe and happy while you are at work or out for an evening is critical to keeping your stress levels down. While cost is important to everyone, it should not be a barrier to finding quality childcare. Parents of special needs children have additional concerns: having their child be well cared for by a qualified person who understands their needs and works to include them in all activities. Regardless of what your needs and finances are, with a little bit of work you can obtain quality childcare, and the piece of mind that comes with it.

### Picking a Childcare Provider

Before you commit to a provider, it is critical to ask questions. Regardless of who referred you or how desperately you need someone, your asking questions and *following up on references* could prevent a tragedy.

- Have you child-proofed your home? Explain.
- What are your safety rules inside and outside?
- If my child were to choke/fall/stop breathing etc. what would you do?
- How would you prevent these incidents from happening?
- Describe an emergency situation you've dealt with.
- How do you try to prevent illnesses from spreading?
- Are all the children in your care immunized?
- Under what circumstances would you call me at work?

There are also many questions that should be asked surrounding play, supervision styles, nutrition, nap time, emotional care and their reasons for being in this profession. If your child has any special needs it is wise to ask questions specific to the needs as well. For a complete listing of questions please visit the Child Care Connection website.

Remember to ask for references. It is important to ask for references who are not friends or family, and one is not enough. Often people ask for at least two current or former parent references and a character reference as well. While it might seem excessive, and it may be a lot of work contacting them, it is a way of helping to ensure that your child is in good hands while you are at work.

Before committing your child to a home or centre it is also important to make a visit to the facilities. Call ahead to book a visit, and take notes. Look for child/caregiver ratios, location, caregiver competency, program materials, nutrition, safety, cleanliness and your overall impression. Checklists to help you make a decision are available at the Child Care Connection website.

### Where to Find Childcare

There are many ways to find childcare. Some people are lucky enough to have day care facilities on site at their workplace or school. Other people may be members of clubs or neighbourhood associations which offer child care services. Some people have a family member or friend who is qualified and available.

However, for most people, finding childcare is a long, labour intensive task. Some waiting lists are a year or



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more in length – meaning that people have to book spaces before their child is even born! When looking for quality childcare, it pays to look as far in advance as is possible, especially for infant or special needs care as both require special facilities and training.

One resource for finding licensed childcare centres and providers is the Child Care Connection, who have an extensive database for your use. The Region of Waterloo offers licensed child care options for those who qualify for the Child Care subsidy Program. You can also get referrals from friends or find advertisements in the newspapers, but be careful if choosing an unlicensed provider. Refer to Picking a Child Care Provider, above, and the Child Care Connection for information.

## How to Pay for Childcare

For those who are having difficulty paying for quality child care, the Region of Waterloo offers the Child Care Subsidy Program. This program provides parents with financial assistance and ensures them placements in licensed programs. Family eligibility is determined based on two factors: an approved Provincial Needs Test and whether parents:

- Work.
- Attend school.
- Are involved in programs through Ontario Works or LEAP.
- Have children needing specialized programming before entering the school system.
- Attend day treatment programs.
- Are ill or disabled and are unable to care for their children.

**For information on applying for this program please call (519) 883-2200.**

For applications to receive the Canada Child Tax Benefit and/or the Child Disability Benefit please visit the Canada Revenue Agency website or talk to Victim Services for assistance. Child care expenses are also tax deductible, and forms are available from Canada Revenue Agency or Victim Services as well.

## Help for Special Needs Families

While having a special needs child can be very rewarding, the additional challenges which can be difficult. Parents often deal with extremely busy schedules, financial constraints and are concerned with their child not having the social opportunities that other children might have.

Parents with special needs children are not alone. There are many parents in the Region who have similar needs and concerns, and support groups can be a way of getting advice and making friendships. There are hundreds of support groups in the Region, and through talking with doctors, other parents, online searches and community agencies parents can find a meeting that will benefit their child and themselves.

For parents who find it difficult to find time for important tasks, respite services might be beneficial. Respite involves having someone come to your home and spend time with your child so that you can have some free time. Generally it is necessary to book in advance, and while it is not a babysitting service it provides the comfort of knowing that your child is being watched by someone who is qualified.

Respite services are offered by Extend-A-Family, the Elmira District Association for Community Living, the Community Care Access Centre, KidsLINK NDSA and K-W Habilitation Services.

## Resources

<b>Canada Revenue Agency</b>	1-800-959-2221
<b>Community Care Access Centre</b>	(519) 748-2222
<b>Elmira District Community Living</b>	(519) 669-3205
<b>Extend-A-Family</b>	(519) 741-0190
<b>Carizon</b>	(519) 746-5437 ext. 136
<b>K-W Habilitation Services</b>	(519) 744-6307
<b>Ministry of Children and Youth Services</b>	(416) 212-7432



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