

A GUIDE TO FINDING CHILD CARE IN ADDISON COUNTY

ADDISON COUNTY is a wonderful, family-friendly community with many resources for children and parents. For working families, finding childcare that is the right fit for your family means considering numerous factors and child care, particularly infant and toddler care, is in high demand.

Fortunately, there are several high quality early childhood options.

Enrollment



Each program has its own system for enrolling new children, but in general, programs notify families on their waiting lists in the late winter/early spring if there will be an opening for their child for the following fall. While there are occasional openings during the school year as families move, jobs change, and a family's need for child care changes, the majority of children will start in late August, in alignment with the public-school calendar.

Waiting Lists



Most center-based programs have waiting lists, as do several of the home-based programs. It is wise to get on as many waiting lists as possible as soon as you know you have, or will have, a need for care. This is especially true for infant and toddler care. It is not uncommon for families to call and ask to be put on a waiting list as soon as they know they are expecting a child.

Admission and Enrollment



The early childhood programs in Addison County are predominately independent non-profit businesses, who work closely together. However, the admission criteria at each program varies according to the program's mission and philosophy. In general, depending upon the individual program, the following criteria are considered:

- Date of application
- Classroom gender balance
- Age range
- Sibling status
- Children and families with special needs
- Enrollment contracts

None of the programs discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, special need, medical condition, ancestry or citizenship.

Notification of Acceptance



When a family is notified that their child has been offered a space in a program, the news can create anxiety in families who have not yet been notified. Unlike the college and university system, early childhood programs do not send all acceptance notifications at a certain time, on a certain date. Many programs "build" their classrooms in alignment with their mission and philosophy. If a family decides they are not accepting a space, a program will return to their waiting list to find the next child on the list who fits their overall criteria. Please know that early childhood programs understand that this can be stressful for families. If a family does not get a slot at their first-choice program, but they are willing to be flexible, perhaps have a slightly longer drive, it is rare that they do not have options.

Infant and Toddler Care



Families needing child care for children under age three have a particular challenge. For obvious reasons, quality early childhood programs have very low child/staff ratios in infant and toddler classrooms, and consequently the number of available openings is critically low. This is a local, state and nationwide problem, not unique to Addison County, with no easy fix. Finding care may demand creativity. For example, if a family can work out a flexible schedule so they only need part time care, their options might be greater, but there is still no guarantee. The county referral specialist will work with you to suggest a number of alternatives and once your child is over the age of two, there are considerably more options.

Referral Specialist



Addison County has a Referral Specialist who keeps an up to date list of all the programs in the county and keeps current information about potential openings. The Referral Specialist can be contacted at (802)388-4304 or referral@mjccvt.org. Depending upon a family's needs, there are school year only programs, part-day programs, full-year, full-day programs, and after school programs, almost any configuration that a family might need.

Families should be aware that the demand for child care varies significantly from year to year. In some years, early childhood programs have vacancies all year and in other years demand far outreaches the system's capacity.

STARS



Vermont has a quality rating system for early childhood programs called STARS (STep Ahead Recognition System). Programs can earn from 1 to 5 stars by going above and beyond state regulations to provide professional early childhood programming that meet the needs of children and families.

- One-star programs are examining their practices to enhance the services they provide. They may be fairly new, just starting on a path of improvement and growth, or be stronger in one area.
- Two-star programs are making a commitment to strengthen their practices. They may have made some progress in many areas or more progress in one or two areas.
- Three-star programs have made improvements and are working to reach specific goals. They have either made substantial progress in two or three areas or have made some improvements across all five areas.
- Four-star programs are established programs that have met several standards of quality in all five areas.
- Five-star programs are outstanding in all five areas. Many five-star programs are also nationally accredited.

Resources for Families



- Addison County Referral Specialist: (802) 388-4304 or referral@mjccvt.org
- Child care program information by town: www.brightfutures.dcf.state.vt.us
(Please note that the program vacancy information on the state website is not reliable)
- National Association for the Education of Young Children, "What to look for in a Program": <https://www.naeyc.org/our-work/families/what-look-program>