

## CONVENIENCE

# HOW TO FIND CARE THAT'S A MATCH FOR YOUR FAMILY'S NEEDS

Even the most glorious childcare program probably isn't a fit if it adds an hour to your commute, and even the greatest nanny in the world won't work if they aren't available during your working hours. In short, what's convenient for one family might be a dealbreaker for another. To find the best fit, you'll first want to decide if in-home or center-based care is the best approach for your family. We asked the experts at Vivvi, a child care and early learning provider, to break down the pros and cons of each approach.

Here's what Vivvi's Director of Family Experience Gretchen Richer says you should consider:

## IN-HOME CARE

If you want in-home care for your little one, you'll need a caregiver. Whether that's a part-sitter, an au pair, or a full-time nanny, the approach comes with a lot of perks, but it can also come with a lot of pressure. Unless you work with an in-home child care provider or agency, like Vivvi, you'll be responsible for hiring and managing your caregiver and, possibly establishing the routine, schedule, and rules for the caregiver to follow with your child. "In-home care can meet your family where you are," says Richer. "It not only offers flexibility in terms of scheduling, but also gives your child personalized attention." Here are a few things to keep in mind:

## PROS

### You set the hours

For busy working parents, one of the biggest perks of hiring in-home care is the ability to establish hours that fit your schedule. That's especially the case if you work part-time (and therefore might not need full-time daycare) or if you work long hours (and wouldn't be able to make it to a daycare pick-up). Just be aware that most caregivers will want some sort of regularity in their schedule or a minimum number of hours, so agree on a weekly schedule beforehand.

### More control

When the care takes place in your home, it's a lot easier to stick to the rules and routines you prefer. (Daycares can't really be flexible, for example, when it comes to nap time.) This is where you'll want to be honest about the amount of control you want to have over your care situation. If you have a lot of very specific preferences regarding, say, outdoor time, types of play, discipline methods and more, in-home care might be a good fit.

### Have nanny, can travel

If you do a lot of traveling, for work or fun, you can often bring your nanny along with your family, and give yourself a break when you need it.

### Individual attention

There's no denying that your baby will get more one-on-one time with a nanny than at a child care center, where it's usually one caregiver for every 3 or 4 infants.

### Flexibility for big families

If you have two or more kids, the child care costs start to stack up fast when you factor in after-school care, daycare and date night sitters. Not to mention, it's pretty much a part-time job ferrying multiple kids around to extracurricular activities, doctors appointments and more. That's why in-home care can be a good solution for big families.

## CONS

### Expense

For most families, hiring a nanny will cost more than center-based care, especially in certain metro areas, like New York, Seattle, Portland, San Francisco and Los Angeles. One way to cut back on expenses, says Richer, is to create a child care share. "We're seeing more and more families pair up for in-home care to reduce the cost but still reap the benefits. It's also a great way to expose your child to more socialization."

### If you work from home, you'll be sharing the space with your caregiver and child

While that can be a good thing (breaks for bonding!), it could also be very distracting, especially if you suspect your child will frequently want your attention.

### You're an employer

You'll be on the hook for all the legal and financial responsibilities that come along with being an employer if you hire a caregiver. That means drafting an employment contract, setting up payroll and taxes, and managing benefits, like paid vacation and sick leave. An in-home child care provider like Vivvi can do the heavy lifting for you, says Richer, and it may be worth the extra investment. "There's so many hidden logistics when it comes to navigating in-home care, and you may not even realize you're missing something important. Leaning on your provider to take care of all the details truly allows you to step away each day with the piece of mind that everything is being taken care of." Utilizing a family member may help too, but you'll still have to be comfortable managing the person who cares for your child.

## CENTER-BASED CARE

There are plenty of options available for parents who are thinking of sending their little one to a child care provider, from small group daycares to early learning centers like Vivvi and much more. There are big differences in cost, curriculum, and more, depending on the type of provider, says Richer. "Make sure you tour any potential child care providers, and ask questions about their hours, educational philosophies and caregivers," says Richer. "This is where your child is going to spend the bulk of their day, and you want it to be a positive experience for them, and for you."

You'll generally find these plusses and minuses for center-based care:

## PROS

### Regularity

Most child care providers are open every weekday, except major holidays (and summer, for some). While a nanny might get sick or have an emergency—leaving you scrambling for a back-up solution—most centers can tap substitute caregivers, if needed. Closures are rare (except, understandably, during the pandemic).

### Lower cost

Center-based child care is typically less expensive than a private caregiver, although that might not be true, depending on if you have two or more children who need care and the type of program you prefer. (Preschools in cities like New York, for example, can cost nearly as much as a nanny.)

### Socialization

One of the biggest benefits of center-based child care is the built-in network of friends for your child—and for you! Your little one will develop important social skills, such as sharing, taking turns, negotiating, and self-control. Meanwhile, you will meet and mingle with neighborhood families who might very well become lifelong friends.

## **Builds cognitive development and behavioral skills**

Studies show that high quality early learning programs like Vivvi can help children gain the necessary academic, emotional, and social skills to prosper in school and beyond. Not all child care centers focus on early learning though. "The words preschool and daycare are often used interchangeably, but they're not the same," says Richer. "Make sure you understand your child care center's early learning philosophy and how much focus is placed on physical, emotional, social and cognitive development even at the youngest of ages."

## **CONS**

### **Commuting**

There's no way around it: If child care takes place outside of your home, you'll have to add drop-off and pickup to your weekly to-do list, and factor the time into your commute.

### **Germ**

It's unlikely your little ones will get through their early years without bringing a virus or two home. The good news? Research shows that being exposed to common viruses during the early years of a child's life may lead to fewer infections during elementary school.

### **Less flexible schedules and rules**

You'll have to abide by the center's schedule—for drop-off and pick-up, but also for your child's daily routine. With so many kids to care for, most centers can't offer flexibility when it comes to nap or lunch time, for example. On the flip side, kids thrive with consistency and repetition, and experienced caregivers will know just what schedule is best for your child's age. If your logistical needs are more individualized, look for flexible enrollment options and extended hours, an increasingly necessary detail in today's age of hybrid work.

## **ABOUT VIVVI**

Vivvi strives to support the whole family, and we'd love to get to know yours! If you're interested in learning more about our child care and early learning programs, sign up for an open house to see what we're doing on our New York Campuses (ages 0-5) or get to know our National In-Home Program (ages 0-14).