

Types of child care services

Choosing the right service can be an exciting and sometimes overwhelming time for you and your child. It's important to consider your options early and research the type of early education and care that suits your family best and will provide the best outcomes for your child.

What are my options?

There are many education and care options available to suit the needs of your child and your family:

+ Long Day Care

Long day care is perfect for those who work long days and need care for their children during business hours. It operates for at least 8 hours a day, typically Monday to Friday in a child care centre and caters for children, from birth to school age.

+ Family Day Care

Family day care is great for parents who want their children to learn and play in small groups, in a home-like environment. It caters for children, birth to 12 years and is held in the home of a registered educator.

+ Preschool Services

Preschool usually caters for children aged three to five years and is perfect for parents with children who are almost ready for primary school. Sometimes known as kindergarten, it can be a standalone service or part of another education and care service or school.

+ Outside School Hours Care

Outside school hours care operates before and after school and/or during school holidays. This service works well for parents with school age children, who need care outside of school hours.

These services are not regulated by the National Quality Framework (NQF):

+ Occasional Child Care

Occasional child care works on a casual basis for short periods of time. It caters for children, birth to school age and suits those who would like or need a temporary service.

+ Mobile Services

Mobile services travel through communities to offer occasional, preschool or long day care services in rural, urban and remote areas. It generally caters for children up to six years old, and is great for parents who live too far away from an early education and care service.

+ Other Child Care Options

There is a wide range of other child care options available, including family, friends, babysitters and nannies. These types of services are flexible and rely heavily on the family's needs. They are generally run in a home and operating times may vary.



Type	Ages	Hours of operation	Where	NQF Regulated?	Description and key benefits
Long Day Care (LDC)	Birth to school age	Usually 8-10 hours p/day	Centre-based environment	Yes	Educators providing education and care to children in a centre-based environment offering extended hours. Provides preparation for school through a play-based learning curriculum. May suit parents working full time.
Family Day Care (FDC)	Birth to 12	Varies	Educator's home	Yes	Educators providing education and care in their homes to small groups of children. May also offer OSHC.
Preschool (ACT, SA, NSW, NT) Kindergarten (QLD, TAS, VIC, WA)	Usually 3 to 5	Varies	Centre-based environment (standalone or part of a school)	Yes	State-funded service that usually offers shorter hours or sessional education and care during school terms. Provides preparation for school through a play-based learning curriculum. It can be a standalone service or part of another education and care service or school.
Outside School Hours Care (OSHC) or Out-of-School Hours (OOSH)	School age	Before/after school; holidays	Often in or near a primary school	Yes	Education and care for school age children before/after school. May also provide education and care during holidays and pupil-free days. Play-based curriculum with a focus on fun and leisure. Will suit working parents.
Occasional Care	Birth to school age	Varies	Varies	No	Casual care for short periods of time. Suitable for parents with short-term or last-minute needs.
Mobile services	Usually birth to 6	Varies	Usually local community centres/libraries etc	Some have adopted the NQF	Mobile services most commonly travel through rural and remote areas to offer education and care to families who live too far away from permanent service.
Informal care	Varies	Varies	Home environment	No	Care options can include nannies, babysitters, family and friends. Provided on a needs basis. May be more accessible or cost effective for some families.