



Finding the right early care and education or out of school time program to meet your child's needs takes time and energy. Finding evening, overnight, or weekend care may take even more time and energy. Most programs are open from 6:30 a.m. until 6:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Providers that offer care outside of these hours are often in short supply.

Parents often prefer to rely on their spouse or other relatives for care during non-traditional hours. However, this is not always possible. If these options are not available, you may need to be more creative in your search for care. The number and range of options will vary depending upon where you live, what is affordable, and the supply in your community.

Here are some options to help you in your search to find care during non-traditional hours:

- Some programs offer care during evenings, weekends, and overnight. However, they are in short supply in most communities. Although some facilities offer regular extended hours, registered family child care homes may be more likely to have flexible schedules that can accommodate your needs.
- A relative may be able to care for your child during non-traditional hours. When using a relative, carefully plan your arrangements, just as you would with a caregiver who is not related to you.
- Consider hiring someone to come to your home. This could be a reliable teenager or older person who might prefer part-time work. You may want to check with local churches, colleges, or friends that may know someone. There are also many in-home placement agencies that can help you find a nanny or babysitter. However, this option may be expensive depending on the number of hours you need care.
- You could offer to care for another family's children a few hours during the week in exchange for a few hours of care in the evening or on weekends. By networking in your neighborhood, you may find parents willing to exchange or share caregiving responsibilities.

What to look for:

1. *Check with the caregiver about her licensing or registration status.* Those caring for more than three children not related to them are required to be registered with the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services.
2. *The caregiver should be supportive.* Spending the evening or night away from home can be a difficult adjustment, especially for younger children. Look for a caregiver who understands your child's needs and is willing to give extra nurturing to make her comfortable away from home.
3. *If your child will be spending the night, check out the sleeping arrangements.* Will someone else share the room? How will your child be supervised? How does she get help during the night, if needed? What is the bedtime routine? Is the caregiver willing to use some of your family's bedtime rituals?

4. **Consider health and safety practices.** Is the center or home in good repair? Is there good ventilation, lighting, and heating? Is the setting safe for children? Are the smoke detectors and fire extinguishers in working condition? Are there enough exits in case of a fire? Is there a first-aid kit available?
5. **Ask for references.** Talk with other parents. Don't be embarrassed to ask detailed questions while visiting the center or home or when talking to references. If you have any hesitation or feelings that the situation does not meet your needs or the needs of your child, keep looking until you find care that you like.

How to prepare your child for care away from home:

- **Help your child understand your job.** Talk about your work and help her understand that there are many important jobs that have to be done at night and on weekends. Let your child visit your worksite with you so that he knows where you will be when he is with the caregiver.
- **Be supportive and positive about the child's caregiver.** Discuss what is to be expected such as eating dinner and going to bed at the center or in another family's home. Take familiar comfort items your child likes to use at bedtime, such as a favorite stuffed animal, pillow, or blanket. Your encouragement and positive attitude will help your child adjust to the new routine.
- **Encourage your child to express his or her feelings.** Listen to your child. It may take some time for your child to adapt to sleeping away from home. Maintain open communication with the caregiver. Talk often with your child about her experiences with the caregiver and what she likes and dislikes about the caregiver and setting.

Is evening, weekend, or overnight care more expensive than other types?

Generally, this kind of care will be more expensive than other types of care. For a center, finding staff to work evenings, weekends, or overnight is costly and enrollment is often lower. These hours of care also bring additional responsibilities for family child care providers, including dinner, baths, homework, and bedtime. The additional costs are passed on to the parents in most cases.

Remember:

Finding the right care for your non-traditional schedule can be complicated. Be persistent and creative in your search. Once you have found an arrangement, work to establish good communication with the caregiver and offer your child love and support as she adjusts to the new care arrangement.

Call ChildCareGroup's Resource and Referral service at 214.631.2273 or 1.800.441.7865 for more free tips on choosing child care, other parenting resources, or assistance in finding child care. Or, visit us at www.ChildCareGroup.org/rr.

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