

## **TITLE: How to Find Child Care for a Child with Special Health Care Needs**

Finding appropriate child care for a child with special health care needs can be a challenging and overwhelming task. Parents must ensure that the care environment is not only safe but also meets their child's unique needs.

This article offers a guide to help parents navigate this complex process, from identifying specific care requirements to selecting the right provider.

### **1. Understanding Your Child's Needs**

The first step in finding suitable child care is to have a clear understanding of your child's specific health care needs. This includes:

- **Medical Needs:** Assess the medical care your child requires, such as medication administration, emergency protocols, and specialized equipment.
- **Developmental Needs:** Consider your child's developmental level and any special educational or therapeutic services they may need.
- **Behavioral Needs:** Identify any behavioral challenges and strategies that have been effective in managing them.

### **2. Researching Child Care Options**

There are several types of child care options available, each with its own set of advantages and challenges:

- **In-Home Care:** Hiring a caregiver to provide care in your home offers a personalized and controlled environment. This option allows for close supervision and the ability to tailor care specifically to your child's needs.
- **Family Child Care Homes:** These are smaller, home-based settings where a caregiver looks after a small group of children. This option can provide a more intimate and flexible environment.
- **Child Care Centers:** Larger facilities that may offer structured programs and access to various resources and professionals. Some centers specialize in or have experience with special health care needs.
- **Specialized Care Centers:** These centers specifically cater to children with special needs and often have trained staff and specialized equipment.

### **3. Evaluating Potential Child Care Providers**

When evaluating potential child care providers, consider the following factors:

- **Training and Experience:** Ensure that the caregivers have appropriate training and experience in dealing with children with special health care needs. While all licensed providers are required to have certifications in first aid and CPR, you should ask about additional training, experience, or certifications that may be needed to care for your child's health care needs.

- **Licensing, Rating, and Accreditation:** Check that the facility is licensed and see if they have any complaints or licensing violations. You can also check the facility's QRIS (Quality Rating Improvement System) star rating and find out if the facility is accredited by any national organizations. Higher star ratings and accreditation often indicates that the provider meets higher standards of care. Use the [Nevada Child Care Resource and Referral Portal](#) to find detailed information on every licensed provider in the state.
- **Environment:** Visit the facility to ensure it is safe, clean, and accessible. Look for features like ramps, wide doorways, and accessible restrooms.
- **Staff-to-Child Ratio:** A lower staff-to-child ratio can provide more individualized attention and care, which is crucial for children with special needs.

#### 4. Interviewing Care Providers

Conduct thorough interviews with potential care providers to assess their suitability. Use the ["Choosing Quality Child Care for Children with Disabilities and High Support Needs"](#) checklist in the Resources section below. Key questions to ask include:

- **Experience and Training:** What is their experience with children with similar health care needs? What specific training do they have?
- **Emergency Procedures:** How do they handle medical emergencies? Are they familiar with your child's emergency care plan?
- **Communication:** How will they communicate with you about your child's day and any issues that arise? Are they willing to work closely with your child's medical and therapeutic team?
- **Activities and Inclusion:** How do they include children with special needs in activities? What adaptations are made to ensure participation?

#### 5. Work with Your Child's Health Care Providers

Work closely with your child's health care providers to ensure that their needs are fully understood and met. This can involve:

- **Developing a Care Plan:** Create a comprehensive care plan that outlines your child's medical, developmental, and behavioral needs. Share this plan with the child care provider.
- **Training and Support:** Arrange for your child's health care providers to offer training or guidance to the child care staff. This can include demonstrations of specific care techniques or emergency procedures.
- **Regular Updates:** Maintain regular communication with both the child care provider and health care professionals to monitor your child's progress and address any concerns as quickly as possible.

#### 6. Utilizing Resources and Support Networks

There are numerous resources and support networks available to help parents find and evaluate child care options:

- **Local Agencies:** Contact local child care [resource and referral agencies](#) for recommendations and assistance.
- **Parent Support Groups:** Connect with other parents of children with special needs to share experiences and recommendations. See Resources below for a list of local parent groups.
- **Online Databases:** Use online databases and directories that list child care providers with experience in special needs care. The [Nevada Medical Home Portal](#) is a resource designed specifically for families who have children with special health care needs.

## 7. Trial Period and Ongoing Evaluation

Before making a long-term commitment, consider arranging a trial period with the chosen child care provider. This allows you to observe how well the provider meets your child's needs and make any necessary adjustments. Ongoing evaluation is also crucial:

- **Regular Check-Ins:** Schedule regular check-ins with the provider to discuss your child's progress and any concerns.
- **Feedback Loop:** Create an open feedback loop where both you and the provider can share observations and suggestions.
- **Flexibility and Adaptation:** Be prepared to make changes if the care environment is not meeting your child's needs. Flexibility is key to finding the best fit.

Finding the right child care for a child with special health care needs requires careful planning, thorough research, and ongoing collaboration. By understanding your child's unique needs, evaluating potential providers rigorously, and utilizing available resources, you can ensure that your child receives the high-quality care they deserve. This proactive approach not only provides peace of mind but also fosters a supportive and nurturing environment where your child can thrive.

### Resources:

Checklist: [Choosing Quality Child Care for Children with Disabilities and High Support Needs](#), a tool developed by Child Care Aware of America available through The Children's Cabinet.

[Child Care Provider Search Portal](#) – Search for licensed providers in your area, check licensing reports, quality ratings, and additional information on potential child care providers.

Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies – Get help finding a child care provider that meets you and your child's unique needs:

- Southern Nevada – [Las Vegas Urban League. Child Care Connection Program](#)
  - Email: [ChildCareInfo@LVUL.org](mailto:ChildCareInfo@LVUL.org)
  - Phone: 702-473-9400 or 855-4UL-KIDS (toll free)

- Northern & Rural Nevada – [The Children’s Cabinet](#)
  - Online Referral Form: <https://www.childrenscabinet.org/self-referral-form-2/>
  - Email: [info@nevadachildcare.org](mailto:info@nevadachildcare.org)
  - Phone: 775-856-6200

Parent Support Groups:

[Nevada PEP](#) is a nonprofit organization that assists families of children with disabilities and behavioral health needs.

[Nevada Blind Children’s Foundation](#) offers resources and supports to for children who are visually impaired.

[Family Navigation Network](#), Nevada Center for Excellence in Disabilities – University of Nevada Reno provides support and resources for children and youth with special health care needs, their families, and the professionals who serve them.