

How to Start a Child Care Co-Operative

Starting a local Child Care Co-Op may be a good solution to families who are comfortable with sharing the responsibility of caring for children with other families in their community.

Co-Op programs can include licensed and unlicensed care, relying on the location and supervision within a small group. Co-Ops are often associated with Universities, places of worship, local community centers, Family Child Care Homes, Centers and businesses. Here are some suggestions if you are interested in starting or joining a currently established Co-Op in your area.

Unlicensed Co-Ops

- You must adhere to small groups in compliance with local mandates (during COVID-19).
- No more than 12 children can be cared for in an unlicensed Co-Op
- No fees can be charged
- Parents/Adults must provide the primary care for children on a rotating basis
- Co-Ops can continue to operate after COVID-19, if all families agree

Licensed Co-Ops (Family Child Care Homes or Child Care Centers)

- May include a Board of Directors with Parent representation
- May include paid staff members along with parent volunteers to keep the costs down
- Costs include liability insurance, cost of staff, facilities, materials, etc
- Costs may be reduced based on the amount of time a parent spends at the center

Things to Consider

- Meet upfront to agree on philosophy and discipline practices
- Locate a space that can be regularly used for child care (church, community center, clubhouse, etc)
- Make sure all adults are reliable and able to meet their commitments when they are providing care
- Adults complete CPR and First Aid classes
- All adults in contact with children should enroll in [TrustLine](#) clearance
- Work with families you trust to keep their commitments (space, time, materials, etc)
- Put expectations in writing
- Agree upon meals provided to children (either brought from home or provided during the day)
- Discuss nap time, school work and activities to be provided during the day
- Provide written updates to each parent regarding the successes of each child during the day
- Keep written emergency contact information on each child
- Discuss any special needs and considerations of each child (allergies, toileting, anxiety, feeding) and ensure all adults involved have clear information and understanding
- Meet on a regular basis to discuss any obstacles or concerns

Resources:

[Child Care Co-Ops](#)

[Child Care Co-ops 101](#)

[Parent Co-Operative International](#)

[California Council of Parent Participation Nursery Schools](#)

Steps to start a formal [Co-Op](#)

[Parents Guide to Choosing Child Care](#)

[Co-Op is more than Volunteering](#)