

Childcare Worker

Snapshot

Career Cluster(s): Business, Management & Administration; Human Services

Interests: Children; childcare; community services

Earnings (Yearly Average): \$24,230

Employment & Outlook: Slower Than Average Growth Expected

OVERVIEW

Sphere of Work

Childcare workers attend to children's needs while helping to foster early development. They may help younger children prepare for kindergarten or assist older children with homework.

Work Environment

Family childcare workers care for children in their own homes. They may convert a portion of their living space into a dedicated space for the children. Nannies usually work in their employers' homes. Childcare workers' schedules vary, and part-time work is common.

Occupation Interest

Individuals involved in childcare enjoy working with children and caring for them when their parents cannot. They are able to multitask and handle multiple children at once, providing a clean and safe environment in which they can play and develop.



Childcare workers at play with their young charges. Photo via iStock.com/Rawpixel. [Used under license.]

A Day in the Life—Duties and Responsibilities

Childcare workers read and play with babies and toddlers to introduce basic concepts. For example, they teach them how to share and take turns by playing games with other children.

Childcare workers help preschool-age children prepare for kindergarten. Young children learn from playing, questioning, and experimenting. Childcare workers use play and other instructional techniques to help children's development. For example, they may use storytelling and rhyming games to teach language and vocabulary. They may help improve children's social skills by having them work together to build something in a sandbox. Or they may teach about numbers by having children count when building with blocks. They also involve children in creative activities, such as art, dance, and music.

Childcare workers may also watch school-age children before and after school. They often help these children with their homework and may take them to after-school activities, such as sports practices and club meetings.

During the summer, when children are out of school, childcare workers may watch older children as well as younger ones while the parents are at work.

Profile

Interests: People, Things, Data

Working Conditions: Inside

Physical Strength: Medium Work

Education Needs: Varies By State, High School Diploma Usually Required

Licensure/Certification: Varies By State

Opportunities for Experience: Training, Part-Time Work

Interest Score: SA

OCCUPATION SPECIALTIES

Childcare Center Worker

Childcare center workers work in facilities that include programs offering Head Start and Early Head Start. They often take a team-based approach and may work with preschool teachers and teacher assistants to teach children through a structured curriculum. They prepare daily and long-term schedules of activities to stimulate and educate the children in their care. They also monitor and keep records of the children's progress.

Family Childcare Provider

Family childcare providers run a business out of their own homes to care for children during standard working hours. They need to ensure that their homes and all staff they employ meet the regulations for family childcare providers. They also

Duties and Responsibilities

- Supervising and monitoring the safety of children
- Preparing and organizing mealtimes and snacks for children
- Helping children keep good hygiene
- Changing the diapers of infants and toddlers
- Organizing activities or implementing a curriculum that allows children to learn about the world and explore their interests
- Developing schedules and routines to ensure that children have enough physical activity, rest, and playtime
- Watching for signs of emotional or developmental problems in children and bringing potential problems to the attention of parents or guardians
- Keeping records of children's progress, routines, and interests

prepare contracts that set rates of pay, when payment can be expected, and the number of hours children can be in care. Furthermore, they establish policies such as whether sick children can be in their care, who can pick children up, and how behavioral issues will be dealt with. Family childcare providers may market their services to prospective families.

Nanny

Nannies work in the homes of the families whose children they care for. Most often, they work full-time for one family. They may be responsible for driving children to school, appointments, or afterschool activities. Some live in the homes of the families employing them.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Immediate Physical Environment

Many states limit the number of children that each staff member is responsible for by regulating the ratio of staff to children. Ratios vary with the age of the children. Childcare workers are responsible for relatively few babies and toddlers. However, workers may be responsible for greater numbers of older children.

Childcare centers usually are open year-round, with long hours so that parents or guardians can drop off and pick up their children before and after work. Some centers employ full-time and part-time staff with staggered shifts to cover the entire day.

Family childcare providers may work long or irregular hours to fit parents' work schedules. In some cases, these childcare providers offer evening and overnight care to meet the needs of families. After the children go home, family childcare providers often have more responsibilities, such as shopping for food or supplies, keeping records, and cleaning.

Nannies work either full- or part-time. Full-time nannies may work more than 40 hours a week to cover parents' time commuting to and from work.

Human Environment

By definition, childcare workers interact with people, especially children, on a daily basis and as part of their jobs. They also interact with parents and guardians, as well as other staff. Childcare workers who run their own business must be prepared to handle any issues that arise, including emergencies, and settle disputes with parents and guardians, and staff members. Nannies interact with family members of their employers, as well as outside individuals such as teachers, tutors, and doctors. Nannies who live with their employers form a unique bond with their employers and their children.

Technological Environment

Childcare workers should be proficient in basic computer software such as word processors, email, and spreadsheets. They may also incorporate the latest educational technology into their activities, including software and mobile apps.

EDUCATION, TRAINING, AND ADVANCEMENT

High School/Secondary

Childcare workers' education requirements vary. Some states require these workers to have a high school diploma or equivalent, but others do not have any education requirements for entry-level positions. Employers often prefer to hire workers who have at least a high school diploma. However, workers with postsecondary education or an early childhood education credential may qualify for higher-level positions.

Childcare workers in Head Start and Early Head Start programs must meet specific education and certification requirements, which vary by work setting and job title.

States do not regulate educational requirements for nannies. However, some employers may prefer to hire workers with at least some formal instruction in childhood education or a related field, particularly when they will be hired as full-time nannies.

Suggested High School Subjects

- Algebra

- Biology
- Chemistry
- Civics
- Earth or Life or Physical Science
- Economics
- English
- Entrepreneurship
- Geometry
- History
- Personal Finance
- Physics
- Pre-Calculus
- Psychology
- Statistics
- Trigonometry

Related Career Pathways/Majors

*Business, Management & Administration
Career Cluster*

- General Management Pathway

Human Services Career Cluster

- Early Childhood Development & Services Pathway

Postsecondary

With a couple of years of experience and a bachelor's degree, childcare workers may advance to become a preschool or childcare center director.

Related College Majors

- Arts Education
- Childcare Provider/Assistant
- Early Childhood Education
- Elementary Education
- Social Work
- Special Education

Adult Job Seekers

Adults with experience working with or caring for children in a developmental setting stand a good chance of transitioning into childcare work, especially as educational requirements are quite minimal.

Transferable Skills and Abilities

Communication Skills

- Providing direction or information effectively and good listening skills to understand parents' instructions

Decision-making Skills

- Responding to emergencies or difficult situations

Interpersonal Skills

- Working well with people to develop good relationships with parents, children, and colleagues

Patience

- Needing to be able to respond calmly to overwhelming and difficult situations

Mechanical Skills

- Operating complex machinery and occasionally performing routine maintenance

Physical Stamina

- Working with children can be physically demanding, so childcare workers should have a lot of energy

Professional Certification and Licensure

Many states require childcare centers, including those in private homes, to be licensed. To qualify for licensure, staff often must pass a background check, have a complete record of immunizations, and meet a minimum training requirement. Some states require staff to have certifications in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid.

Some states and employers require childcare workers to have a nationally recognized credential. Most often, states require the Child Development Associate (CDA) credential offered by the Council for Professional Recognition. Obtaining the CDA credential requires coursework, experience in the field, and a period during which the applicant is observed while working with children. The CDA credential must be renewed every 3 years.

Other organizations, such as The National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) may also offer optional accreditation.

Additional Requirements

Many states and employers require providers to complete some training before beginning work. Also, many states require staff in childcare centers to complete a minimum number of training hours annually. Training may include information about topics such as safe sleep practices for infants.

EARNINGS AND ADVANCEMENT

Pay varies with the worker's education level and work setting. Those in formal childcare settings and those with more education usually earn higher wages. Median annual earnings of childcare workers were \$24,230 in 2019.

Pay for self-employed workers is based on the number of hours they work and the number and ages of children in their care.

EMPLOYMENT AND OUTLOOK

Childcare workers held 1,146,400 jobs in 2019. Twenty-three percent were self-employed. Employment is expected to grow slower than the average for all occupations through the year 2029, at a rate of 2 percent. Parents or guardians who work will continue to need the assistance of childcare workers. In addition, the demand for preschools and childcare facilities, and consequently childcare

Fast Fact

Most people who start small businesses are between ages 40 and 60. Source: smallbizgenius.com



An older couple at their self-owned coffee business. Photo via iStock.com/pixelfit. [Used under license.]

workers, should remain strong because early childhood education is widely recognized as important for a child's intellectual and emotional development. However, the increasing cost of childcare may reduce demand for childcare workers.

Despite limited employment growth, about 160,200 openings for childcare workers are projected each year, on average, over the decade.

Most of those openings are expected to result from the need to replace workers who transfer to different occupations or exit the labor force, such as to retire.

Workers who attain the Child Development Associate credential should have the best job prospects.

Related Occupations

- Kindergarten/Elementary School Teacher
- Preschool/Childcare Center Director
- Preschool Teacher
- Special Education Teacher
- Teacher Assistant

MORE INFORMATION

Child Care Aware of America

703.341.4100

membership@usa.childcareaware.org

www.childcareaware.org

Council for Professional Recognition

2460 16th Street NW

Washington, DC 20009-3547

800.424.4310

www.cdacouncil.org

International Nanny Association

P.O. Box 70496
Milwaukee, WI 53207
888.878.1477
info@nanny.org
nanny.org

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

1401 H Street NW, Suite 600
Washington, DC 20005
800.424.2460
help@naeyc.org
www.naeyc.org

National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC)

700 12 Street NW
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202.796.5700
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National Child Care Association (NCCA)

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877.537.6222
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nationalchildcare.org