

Get paid to care for children!

FabJob Guide to
**Become a
Daycare
Owner**



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1. Introduction

Congratulations on your decision to start a daycare business. You're on your way to a stimulating and rewarding career, providing a service that is not only much-needed, but much-appreciated, by working parents and the children they are raising.

As a daycare owner, you will offer daily supervision and care for a group of children in a setting you choose. It's a hands-on profession — you will soothe bumped knees and hurt feelings on a daily basis, as well as receive the unconditional hugs and smiles of gratitude that only come from the young.



Daycare owners are organized, creative and energetic. You'll plan schedules, activities and meals, and you may supervise or hire staff members. You'll develop a sense of the big picture, as well as an ability to manage the tiny details of every day, such as remembering which child prefers a blue blanket, and which one is afraid of dogs.

As long as parents have needed to spend time in the workplace, they have needed to find places for their children to be safely cared for during the day. Sometimes, this was as simple as sending the children to stay with their grandparents, another family member, or a neighbor.

But in today's world of family members living thousands of miles apart, busy lifestyles, delayed retirement and single parenting, family and neighbors who are available to look after children are not that easy to find. Professional childcare is needed in every community, from small towns to large cities. It is a need that will never go away, as long as parents are in the workplace.

Perhaps you're thinking about looking after just a few children at a time in your own home. Or perhaps you'll be responsible for a larger group of children in an away-from-home setting. No matter what you have in mind, the rewards are great — and they go far beyond financial compensation.

1.1 A Much-Needed Service

According to the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA), two-thirds of all children in America under six years old are regularly cared for by someone who is not their parent. The NACCRRA estimates that in 2010, 64% of mothers returned to work within the first year after giving birth..

As the need for out-of-home care for children increases, so does government and corporate support for this care. In 1990 the American government created a National Child Care and Development Block Grant program, which is administered by each state and provides child care subsidies to families with low incomes.

In Canada, the federal government recently budgeted \$250 million over five years for the creation of 125,000 new child-care spaces.

Susan Prentice, writing in the introduction to her anthology *Changing Child Care: Five Decades of Child Care Advocacy and Policy in Canada*, says: “The child care movement at the national level has long advanced what some critics see as a utopian vision: a universally accessible, publicly funded, high-quality, non-profit system of care, to which all children, parents and families are entitled.”

Daycare has begun to be seen as a **public responsibility**, one that will grow in both the United States and Canada, creating jobs and opportunities for individuals who want to enter into the field.

Daycare in Society

Daycares began, at least in the form we recognize today as a place where young children are looked after by adults who aren't necessarily related to them, in the late 1800s. They were often charitable organizations that looked after children whose mothers were forced by circumstance to work.

At times over the past century, daycare has been regarded as at best a “necessary evil” by those who believe that children are best cared for by their own parents. However, as society has changed, so have people's views of daycare.

New studies have shown that children who attend daycare are more prepared for school routines and learning once they reach school age. And a Canadian study cited by the Child Care Training Project found that enrollment in family daycare settings was one factor that contributed to higher language and cognitive development.

There is also current research to support the idea that children who spend time in daycare are better-adjusted to social settings in general. This may be because they are exposed to other children from an early age, and therefore learn to get along in groups sooner than children raised at home without siblings.

In general, daycares are meant to provide a supportive, nurturing situation where children can reach their learning potential, and where parents can be assured of quality care for their children. They are not meant to replace families or be primary caregivers for children, but rather, to support families and parents.

A well-written article from Child and Family Canada explains how daycare opens up a broader world to children, and helps them form lasting friendships, bonds with caregivers and an independent sense of self. You can read it online at their website at:

Daycare Helps My Child Thrive
<http://www.kidnkaboodle.net/daycarehelps.html>

1.2 Benefits of the Career

One of the most common reasons people choose to start their own daycare is that it allows them to **look after their own children** while earning a salary — for many new parents, it's the ultimate parenting/work opportunity. Running a home daycare also provides your children with instant playmates.

But like many other “fab” jobs, being a daycare owner offers additional benefits you just can't get in any other career. Here's a look at the obvious ones... you'll likely discover even more benefits that are personal to you and your situation as well.

Make a Difference

Your decision to become a daycare owner is one that shows you have not only a great appreciation for children, but a sense of social responsibility. It is the caregivers and teachers who are at the front lines of shaping the next generation. Your work will provide you with not only a sense of satisfaction, but a sense of **changing the future**, one person at a time.

You'll be rewarded by the joy of children's laughter, and by watching them grow into independent, unique individuals. You'll be inspired by your ability to help them meet challenges, learn new things, and discover new facets of the world around them. You'll be a teacher, a mentor and a caregiver — someone children love, trust, and learn from. As such, you'll also learn about yourself, and discover new strengths and abilities you never knew you possessed.

In this job, you'll watch children **grow and change**. You'll help them overcome their fears, and discover their creativity and intellect. You'll teach them about life and community, and get them started on their lifelong path of learning and growth. This is the kind of start that is invaluable, and your ability to provide it will have parents lining up at your door.

You'll also be an appreciated and trusted part of the parents' lives. As the person who provides the daily care for their children, they will turn to you with respect and admiration. They will look to you for the energy, fun and stimulation that you will provide for their children, and trust you for your ability to provide the same level of comfort and care as they would themselves. They'll rely on you to be there when they need you the most.

Flexibility

When you plan your daycare, you can set the hours that work for you. If your spouse gets home from work at 6:00 p.m., you can ask that all children are picked up by 5:30 so you'll have time to drive home, or start dinner if you run your daycare from home. If you're a night owl, you might consider opening a daycare for children of night-shift workers, or offer part-time weekend care.

You can also be flexible in your daily routine. While a certain amount of planning is essential, it's not set in stone. If nobody wants to go outside in the rain, you don't have to do it, even if it's on the day's list of planned activities.

You can shape your business to reflect your own philosophy of learning and childcare, and thereby create a niche that will keep clients coming, year after year. Yes, there are certain standards of safety and care that must be met, but as far as curriculum goes, it's up to you.

Be Your Own Boss

As a daycare owner, you will be the one making the important decisions, and will be able to set the direction of your business as you see fit. Because this is a tremendously flexible industry, you can start small, with just a few children in your care, and **grow your business** as you desire. It is a growth industry, which you can translate into financial success if you are interested in making your daycare as large as it can be. If you've got a proven formula, you can also franchise your daycare center.

You can focus your business to the areas that interest and excite you. If you value the arts, you might want to open a daycare that provides plenty of opportunities for children to paint, play dress-up and explore music. If you're a person who feels strongly about

your faith, you can open a daycare for the children of parents who value spiritual guidance. If you are interested in sports, you can shape your daycare's philosophy around a focus on physical activities and team-building.

1.3 Inside This Guide

This comprehensive guide will prepare you for running your own daycare, with easy-to-follow information, professional tips and links to numerous useful resources. When you have finished reading it, you will be ready to take the next step towards starting this fabulous business in your community.

Chapter 2 (**The World of Childcare**) will introduce you to what's involved with the job, from hands-on care to running the business. Daycares exist in many shapes and sizes, and you can learn about your options here. We'll also be detailing the skills you'll need to be a success, many of which you may already have. The chapter rounds out with a look at getting some formal or informal experience in the field, so you are ready to make a quick start into this fabulous career.

Chapter 3 (**Planning Your Daycare**) launches you right into critical start-up information on choosing a location, legal matters, and how to take your concept from idea to reality. You'll also learn how to track down the licensing requirements for your daycare, what to expect for start-up costs, and where to look for funding if you need it. Next you'll get the low-down on purchasing equipment and supplies, and how you can lay out a fun and functional care space. Finally, whether you are planning on hiring two or twenty staff, the guide has you covered from background checks to interview questions.

Ready to open your doors? Chapter 4 (**Meeting Children's Needs**) is all about your favorite topic — looking after kids! You may know how to handle one or two little ones, but things change completely when you're dealing with a group, so be prepared. Learn tried-and-true tips from the experts on organizing your day, from nap time to meal time to play time. This chapter also covers developmental stages to expect from infant to school-age, as well as daycare hygiene and safety practices.

Chapter 5 (**Running Your Daycare**) informs you about the business aspects of daycare ownership. How to plan varied activities for children that stimulate and challenge them, how to inspire your staff to reflect your own enthusiasm and high standards, and how to handle the unexpected are all covered here. You'll also learn how daycare owners set their fees, and how to keep records and business matters organized and ready for inspection. You'll also get step-by-step instructions on writing a policy manual, and how to use it to keep the doors of communication open between you and parents.

Chapter 6 (**Getting Clients**) is your ticket to popularity in your community. You'll find out how to promote your daycare on a budget, and what you'll need to do it. If you're looking to stand out from the crowd, you can read over our list of daycare specialties you can consider. The chapter concludes with a guide to parent interviews and enrollment, and how to help children (and parents!) manage that sensitive first day apart.

Chapter 7 (**Resources**) rounds out the guide with a list of daycare-related associations and websites to bookmark and come back to for information and ideas. Finally, there is a comprehensive, state-by-state and province-by-province listing of daycare regulation agency contacts. Just look up your state or province and find the phone number and websites that will connect you to the ever-changing standards for daycare in your region.

So let's get started! There are parents eager for your services, and, even more importantly, children who can hardly wait to **have fun** with you.