

Choosing the best day care: Research shows a private home setting may not be the best choice

Report to the Canadian Council on Learning from the Canadian Centre for Knowledge Mobilisation

The Bottom Line:

The authors of this review assessed 66 research reports on child care. They found that care provided in child care centres was better for child development than private home care. They also found that younger age at entry into day care, longer time in day care, higher quality care, and higher teacher education level resulted in better child development. Therefore, the conditions of child care do influence the learning and language skills and behaviour of children.

What is the problem being addressed?

The care and environment provided during infancy and the preschool years strongly influence a child's future learning ability and social skills. 54% of Canadian children experience some sort of non-parental care before entering school, but there is still much debate about how the conditions of child care (quality, type, choice of caregiver) affect the intellectual, language and behavioral development of a child.

What is the intervention being tested?

The Canadian Centre for Knowledge Mobilization (CCKM) reviewed 66 papers that looked at whether or not there was a relationship between the conditions of child care provided outside the home and children's thinking and language skills or their behavior. Test results of 28,000 children aged 0-to-8 years from five different countries were included in the review. Any family factors that are known to influence child development were taken into account in the analysis.

What is the *real scientific* evidence?

The authors examined 7 facets of non-parental child care: type of care, age of entry, time spent in care, stability/consistency of care, quality of care, teacher education and adult-child ratio. Evidence showed that the intellectual and language development of children receiving care in a day care centre was better than those being cared for in a private home. It was also found that earlier entry and more time spent in care resulted in more positive intellectual, language and behavioral development. Higher quality of care (assessed by the space, furnishings, language level, amount/quality of activities, caregiver interactions, etc.) resulted in better development of intellectual and language skills and

slightly better social skills. A higher level of teacher education resulted in better development in all areas.

The argument that private home day care settings are better than day care centres could not be supported by this review. This may be because the quality in publicly funded child care centres is more consistent whereas the quality can vary greatly from one home setting to the next.

Read the full report: [CCKM's Research Guide to Child Care Decision Making](#).

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The preceding is a summary of:

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