



Early Childhood  
Development Agency

# Guide for Parents with

# Children in Child Care Centres



ISBN : 978-981-05-9761-0

© Early Childhood Development Agency  
[www.ecda.gov.sg](http://www.ecda.gov.sg)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the permission of Early Childhood Development Agency.

All information in this book is accurate as at 20 March 2019.



# CONTENTS

## Introduction

|                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Introduction                          | 1 |
| Early Childhood<br>Development Agency | 2 |
| Child Care Link                       | 5 |
| Child Care Centres                    | 6 |
| Role of Parents                       | 8 |

## Frequently Asked Questions

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Administrative Matters                          | 13 |
| Financial Matters                               | 17 |
| Programme and Curriculum                        | 25 |
| Safety, Health,<br>Hygiene & Nutrition          | 33 |
| Singapore Pre-School<br>Accreditation Framework | 45 |
| Staff Matters                                   | 49 |
| Subsidy Matters                                 | 55 |
| Annex – Useful Contacts                         | 69 |





# Introduction

# Introduction

**For parents**, starting your child in an infant or child care centre is an important and major decision. Through this guide, the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) hopes to provide parents with useful information on child care and infant care to help parents better understand how you can best assist and develop your child.

In particular, a strong parent-centre partnership is important for the well-being of the child. The quality of this partnership is enhanced when parents have access to appropriate information on child care matters, which will aid your understanding of your role in your child's development.

**The guide provides:-**

- frequently asked questions pertaining to child care operations, subsidy support, safety, health, hygiene matters and centre administration among others;
- information on relevant agencies that parents may approach for child care.



*We should be concerned with how far our children go rather than just how fast our children start. A fast start without strong foundations will not allow our children to go far. A gradual start with strong foundations will certainly allow our children to go further.*

*- Mr Chan Chun Sing  
Minister for Social and Family Development*





## Role of

# Early Childhood Development Agency in Licensing Child Care Centres

The Early Childhood Development Agency or ECDA licenses child care centres in Singapore under the Child Care Centres Act (Cap 37A) and Regulations. All child care centres are required to obtain a licence before commencing operations. This licence states the tenure for which the licence is valid and it is displayed in the centre.

Licence tenures range from 6 months to 24 months. For instance, a 24-month licence indicates that a centre has commendably met the key licensing requirements, while a 6-month licence indicates that the centre has several areas for further improvement.

ECDA conducts regular unannounced visits to ensure that child care centres meet these stipulated standards of care in the following areas:

- physical environment
- safety, health, hygiene and nutrition
- staff training, qualifications and requirements
- programme and curriculum
- administration

A licensing checklist is used to assess the quality and standard of care in the centres. A copy of the licensing checklist is available to all child care centres for self-evaluation as part of their efforts to continuously enhance the quality of care in their centres.



## Child Care Link

[www.childcarelink.gov.sg](http://www.childcarelink.gov.sg)

Child Care Link is a one-stop portal on child care information and services. More information about child care centres can be found here, including how to choose a centre that best suits your needs, and the subsidies available.

# Child Care Centres

A child care centre plays an important role in a child's developing years. For a child, significant developments in the physical, intellectual, emotional, social, aesthetic and creative domains occur while he/she is in the centre.

Child care centres should:-

- ensure that their rules and regulations are explicit and clearly explained to parents;
- employ staff who are appropriately trained and conduct themselves professionally;
- ensure good standards of care and development;
- maintain open and regular channels of communication with parents.





# Role of Parents

As parents, you too have an important role to play, and it is important to build a positive relationship with your child's teachers.

Parents are encouraged to:-

- volunteer your time and expertise to build a relationship with the centre (e.g. storytelling, sharing sessions, craft work, helping out in field trips, festive celebrations, seminars, talks, workshops etc);
- familiarise yourself with the child care centre's handbook which spells out the philosophy of care, and rules and regulations of the centre;
- discuss matters relating to the well-being of your child;
- work with the centre to build a successful partnership through regular and open dialogue.



This guide serves as a supplement to the centre's handbook which you would have received upon enrolling your child in the child care centre.

It is important for you to approach the supervisor and teachers directly with your concerns as they are your child's primary caregivers and are in the best position to provide you with the necessary information or feedback on incidents and operational matters.





# Frequently Asked Questions

“

*If I had my child to raise all over again,  
I'd build self-esteem first, and the house later.  
I'd finger-paint more, and point the finger less.  
I would do less correcting and more connecting.  
I'd take my eyes off my watch, and watch with my eyes.  
I'd take more hikes and fly more kites.  
I'd stop playing serious, and seriously play.  
I would run through more fields and gaze at more stars.  
I'd do more hugging and less tugging.*

*- Diane Loomans  
from 'If I Had My Child To Raise Over Again'*

”

## Administrative Matters



*Parents are the first and most important teachers for their children. They are also their children's life mentors.*

*- Dr Christine Chen  
President, Association for Early Childhood Educators, Singapore*



### **Q1. What are the operating hours of a child care centre?**

Operating hours are typically:

**Mondays - Fridays:**

open no later than 7 am and close no earlier than 7pm

**Saturdays:**

open no later than 7 am and close no earlier than 2pm

Work place child care centres may follow the working hours of the respective organisations they are located in (e.g. open at 7.30am or 5-day work week). For more information on centres with extended operating hours, please visit our website at [www.childcarelink.gov.sg](http://www.childcarelink.gov.sg).

**Q2. Apart from gazetted public holidays, is a child care centre allowed to close for additional days in a year?**



A child care centre is open throughout the year except on:-

- Sundays;
- gazetted public holidays; and
- 6 days of annual closure (which includes Teacher's Day and a minimum 2.5 days for staff training and development, to enable staff to improve their knowledge and skills in early childhood development as well as to enhance curriculum and operations of centres).

The 6 closure days do not include 3 half-days on the eve of any of the 5 stipulated public holidays. These are Christmas, New Year, Chinese New Year, Hari Raya and Deepavali.

The centre is required to inform parents at the beginning of each calendar year and remind parents one month prior to the closure day. Notice of closure days should also be displayed on the centre's notice board for parents' information.

## Financial Matters



*Responsible parents do not “Give Up”.....they  
“Try Again ...and Again...and Again...”*

*– Dr Jane Ching-Kwan  
Chief Executive Officer, KLC School of Education*



**Q1. I decided to withdraw my child from the child care centre without giving the one month notice as required by the centre. The child care centre forfeited my deposit. What should I do? How can ECDA assist me?**

Child care centres are private business entities with their own administrative policies on financial matters such as the collection of child care fees, deposits, procedures for refunds and waiver of fees during the child’s hospitalization or prolonged medical leave.



ECDA does not intervene in private contracts signed between a child care centre and parents. Parents should read and understand the terms and conditions stated in the child care centre’s handbook prior to signing the acknowledgement.

Parents should abide by the centre’s financial and administrative practices, and approach the child care centre directly for any clarification.

You are advised to settle issues regarding monetary refunds directly with the child care centre. However, should both parties fail to resolve the refund issues amicably, either party may seek assistance from the Small Claims Tribunal\*.

*\*For more information on Small Claims Tribunal, please refer to pg73 of this handbook.*

**Q2. My child's centre has asked that I pay for some items which my child will be using at the centre. What should I do?**

Child care fees are inclusive of toiletries, stationery, activity sheets and readers. Parents may provide special toiletries for medical reasons. The provision of diapers and milk powder for infants / toddlers is usually discussed and agreed between the centre and the parents at the time of registration. In most centres, the parents provide the diapers and milk powder as individual infants have differing needs.

Items that child care centres may charge include:-

- mattresses, mattress covers, stack cots (these items may be brought home upon the child leaving the centre);
- uniforms;
- annual insurance coverage (optional). Parents may request information about the extent of insurance coverage from the centre at the point of registration.



**Q3. My child's centre has asked that I pay for the school fees every term instead of monthly. Is this an acceptable practice?**

Most child care centres collect child care fees on a monthly basis. However, centres may make provision for other payment terms of up to 3 months, for example, a bi-monthly or term-based fee but parents must be given the option to pay fees on a monthly basis. All modes of payment must be stated clearly in the Parents' Handbook and parents may select a payment mode which best suits their needs.

**Q4. What are ECDA's guidelines on fees charged by centres for field trips / concerts?**

Field trips are conducted by centres to enrich children's learning experiences whereas participation in centre concerts are meant to enhance the child's sense of pride and confidence. ECDA does not set guidelines on the fees chargeable for these activities or its related cost. However, ECDA requires all centres to provide parents with an "Opt-out" option for participating in such activities.





**Q5: I have been given one month's notice by the centre to withdraw my child. Is this an acceptable practice?**

Centres generally strive to provide the best services for the children under their care. However, if the centre is not able to meet the needs of a particular child, they may ask parents to source for alternative centres which are better equipped to meet the child's needs.

A child's interest is best realized when he/she is placed in a centre with the necessary resources to support the child's development. Child care centres are private business entities with their own administrative policies. As such, ECDA does not govern the enrolment/withdrawal policy or contracts signed between a child care centre and parents.

**Q6: I was asked to sign an indemnity form by my child's centre to state that I should not hold the centre responsible for any accidents inside and outside the centre. They told me that this is a standard practice in every child care centre. May I know who will take responsibility for such accidents if and when they occur?**

All contracts signed between centres and parents are deemed to be private contracts. ECDA does not endorse the terms on which centres may agree with parents concerning the limitation of liability.

While centres may require parents to sign indemnity forms, child care centres are still required under the law to exercise proper care and supervision in the daily management of children. ECDA will take appropriate action against centres should there be a breach of licensing requirements.





**Q7. My child's centre keeps increasing their school fees. In three years, they have already increased it twice. Are there guidelines that child care centres must abide by?**



ECDA provides guidelines to centres to ensure that any fee revisions are carried out in a transparent manner. Centres are required to:-

- provide parents with sufficient advance notice, on or before 1 Sept of the preceding year, for any fee revisions in a particular calendar year;
- explain to parents the rationale behind the revision; and
- assist parents with queries as a result of the fee increase.

Centres' incidental charges (e.g. insurance, mattress covers) are also published in ECDA'S website for parents' information.

## Programme and Curriculum



*I hear and I forget. I see and I remember.  
I do and I understand.*

- Confucius



**Q1: I am concerned whether my child is well prepared for his formal education when he enters primary school.**

A copy of the “Nurturing Early Learners: A Curriculum Framework for Kindergartens in Singapore” and the refreshed “Kindergarten Curriculum Guide” are extended to all preschools (Child Care Centres and Kindergartens). Centres are guided on the outcomes of pre-school education through this framework to design, plan and implement a developmentally appropriate curriculum.

Any preschooler attending a child care centre would receive an education of similar standing to kindergartens to prepare him/her for primary school.

**Q2: Child care centres offer different types of curriculum. How do parents distinguish the ‘better programmes’?**

There are many curriculum approaches embodying quality care and education. Regardless of the approach, the curriculum should provide for the holistic development of the children. ECDA does not mandate the use of a specific curriculum nor does it endorse a particular curriculum model. Parents are encouraged to visit the centre to determine if the curriculum meets their expectations and needs.

Parents may also wish to note the period of the centre’s licence tenure and/or whether the centre is certified with the Singapore Pre-school Accreditation Framework (SPARK) as these are other quality indicators of the centre (see section on SPARK for more info).

**Q3. My child is asked to participate in the centre's optional speech and drama lessons. Is the centre allowed to conduct such lessons with an additional charge?**

Guidelines for optional programmes in child care centres are as follows:-

- optional programmes are conducted between the hours of 4pm and 6pm on weekdays;
- centres are to assess the utility of such programmes, especially how they complement the regular curriculum and children's development during core programme hours;
- parents are given an option to decide on their children's participation;
- provision of routine care and programme will continue for children who are not participating in the optional programmes.



**Q4. Will my child lose out if he/she does not participate in the centre's optional programmes?**

On its own, the child care centre's core programme should cater for the holistic development for a child. Optional programmes are add-on activities and therefore not compulsory. Centre staff are required to continue conducting the core programme for children who do not participate in these optional programmes.

**Q5. Why do child care centres organise field trips/excursions? Is participation compulsory?**

To reinforce children's learning in a meaningful context, child care centres may organise field trips/excursions as part of follow-up activities to extend children's learning experiences.

Guidelines for field trips are as follows:-

- children's participation is optional;
- centres should arrange for programme staff to supervise and look after children who do not participate in these outings.

Costs for field trips / excursions are usually separate from the main programme fees.

**Q6. Is there a specified limit to the number of excursions a child care centre can organise in any given year?**

As each centre has its own philosophy and curriculum/ programmes, the centre has the prerogative to decide on the frequency of these outings. You may wish to approach the centre supervisor should you have concerns or require clarification.



**Q7. My child has learning difficulties and I am concerned that he cannot benefit from the child care programme.**

Some child care centres provide Integrated Child Care Programmes (ICCP) for children with learning difficulties so as to maximize their learning potential. The objective of an integrated programme is to provide early intervention for a child to manage his/her learning difficulties and for a smooth transition into mainstream school.

Parents who require such services should check with centres on their philosophy and programme. Parents may refer to SG Enable's website at [www.sgenable.sg](http://www.sgenable.sg) [go to Children(0-6yrs) >> Integrated child Care Programme] for a list of the centres providing integrated child care programmes.



**Q8. My child is unable to tell me what she learns from the centre. Does she have any learning difficulties? Who should I discuss my concerns with?**

You should raise your concerns with your child's teachers or the centre's supervisor. Parents are encouraged to work closely with the centre to develop strategies and ways to aid your child's individual development.



## Safety, Health, Hygiene & Nutrition



*To be in your child's memories tomorrow,  
you have to be in their lives today.*

*- Barbara Johnson*



**Q1. My child had a high fever last night but it subsided this morning. Can I bring my child to the child care centre?**

Fever is usually a symptom of infection. It would be advisable to let the child rest at home and observe him/her for a day before sending the child to the child care centre. If the fever develops during the day, the child care centre would require you to pick your child up for proper medical attention.



**Q2. My child has just recovered from Chicken Pox. Can I bring him back to the centre upon expiry of the medical certificate?**

To safeguard the well-being of other children in the centre, a child who is diagnosed with infectious diseases such as Hand, Foot, Mouth Diseases (HFMD) or Chicken Pox should not be brought to the child care centre until he/she has fully recovered. The child may be permitted to return to the centre upon the expiry of the medical certificate and when the child is well (i.e. no more symptoms of illness). However, if there are still doubts over the child's condition, the centre may ask parents to bring the child to a medical practitioner for further assessment and ask for a certificate of fitness before the child can return to the centre.



**Q3. My child has been sick for the past few days. He is on medication and displays symptoms of cough and cold. The centre had requested a letter from a registered medical practitioner to prove that he is fit. Is this letter of certification required?**

To safeguard the well-being of other children in the centre, a letter from a registered medical practitioner certifying that your child is fit to return to the centre may be required if your child is still displaying symptoms of illness. If a doctor is not prepared to certify that your child is fit to return to the centre, it is an indication that your child is still unwell and should rest at home. This is advisable because secondary infections could occur as your child's immune system is still weak.

**Q4. I am concerned about the hygiene practices in my child's child care centre. Who can I discuss my concerns with?**

Child care centres are required to adhere to the Ministry of Health's (MOH) "Infection Control Guidelines for Schools and Child Care Centres". You may discuss your specific concerns with the centre supervisor. If you have further concerns, you may contact ECDA. Our officer in charge of the child care centre will look into the matter and advise the centre accordingly.

**Q5. My child's child care centre has an outbreak of HFMD. At which point will the centre be instructed to close so that the outbreak can be stopped?**

There are 2 possible types of closure of centres during a HFMD outbreak.

**1. Mandatory Closure**

Where the situation warrants a closure of a child care centre based on the strain of viruses, number of cases and transmission period, MOH and ECDA will notify the affected centre to close to stop further transmission of the disease.

**2. Voluntary Closure**

Child care centres may consider voluntary closure if they perceive a need to do so, usually when the number of confirmed cases are high. However, this is subject to consent from all the parents and approval from ECDA.

**Q6. How long will the child care centre be closed during a HFMD outbreak at the centre?**

MOH has advised that for transmission to be stopped completely, the minimum closure period is 10 days. During the centre's closure, staff would thoroughly clean and disinfect their premises, equipment, materials and toys.

**Q7. Can I bring my child to another centre temporarily when my child care centre is closed?**

The child care centre is closed to break the transmission of HFMD. If your child has been exposed to HFMD, he/she may only develop symptoms at a later stage and may inadvertently risk infecting children in the other centre. Parents should therefore not enroll your child in another child care centre.

**Q8. Can ECDA impose a rule that the centre refunds or pro-rates its fees when it is ordered to close during a HFMD transmission?**

Parents should understand that it may be difficult to determine the cause of a HFMD outbreak in a centre which may inadvertently lead to centre closure. As such, ECDA does not have a policy which requires centres to refund parents or pro-rate fees.

**Q9. My child often comes home with mosquito bites. I have shared my concerns with the child care centre but I do not think they have taken any action. What can I do?**

Mosquito breeding is prevented through fogging and spraying insecticide at the beginning or end of the day. If the mosquito problem persists, you or the centre can approach the National Environment Agency (NEA) or the Town Council for advice and assistance. You may also request that the child care centre update you on the preventive measures it has taken to control mosquito problems in the centre.

Parents may also consider supplying mosquito repellent creams, patch and sprays for their child's use while in the centre if their children are especially prone to mosquito bites.





### Q10. How will I know if the child care centre is serving nutritious food for my child's meals?

The meals served in the centre should include breakfast, lunch and afternoon tea. The centre's weekly menu should be posted on the Parents' Notice Board for parents' information.

All child care centres have been given a copy of the "Guide to Healthy Meals in Child Care Centres" which provides centres with resources and information on planning nutritionally balanced meals. Centres are also encouraged to participate in the 'Healthy Eating in Child Care Centres Programme' and be a recipient of the 'Healthy Eating Award'. More information on the programme as well as the list of centres conferred this award can be obtained from [www.hpb.gov.sg/HOPPortal/health-article/2792](http://www.hpb.gov.sg/HOPPortal/health-article/2792).

Should your child have special dietary requirements, do discuss them with the centre's supervisor. Parents are also required to inform centres of any food allergies their child may have, and these allergies are to be displayed near the dining area for ease of reference by all staff.



### Q11: Can my child bring his/her food to the centre?

Before enrolment, centres are to inform parents of the dietary arrangements at the centre. Parents should be comfortable with this and clarify their concerns at the outset, e.g. checking with the centre if it is able to facilitate special arrangements should the child need to bring his/her food due to unique dietary requirements.

### Q12. What are some of the mandatory health and safety measures that child care centres are required to adhere to?

Some of the safety and health measures that centres are required to comply with include:-

- frequent disinfecting of toys and materials;
- daily health checks for children;
- reinforcing good hygiene practices among children (washing hands after meals, after going to the toilet, after outdoor play, upon arriving at the centre etc.);
- ensuring that toiletries such as toilet paper and liquid soap are accessible to children at all times; and
- ensuring that personal effects such as toothbrushes / mattress covers are adequately maintained.





**Q13. I noticed bruises on my child's arm when I went to pick him up from the child care centre. The child care centre staff did not inform me about any incident. What action should I take?**

You should speak to your child's teacher immediately to find out how these bruises came about. Discuss with your child's teacher or centre management on the subsequent actions taken to prevent a repeat of the incident.

**Q14. My child is frequently bitten by a classmate. What should I do?**

Raise your concern with your child's teachers or the centre's supervisor. You may request the centre's action plan in handling this matter including ensuring the safety of your child. The centre should also prepare an individual intervention plan to help the other child curb his/her biting behaviour.

**Q15. I hear teachers shouting and screaming at the children in my child's centre very often. Who should I approach concerning such child management methods?**

Discuss this with the centre's supervisor and clarify whether she is aware of the issue. Ask about the centre's child management methods. If the situation does not improve, approach ECDA and we will look into the matter to ensure that the centre adopts appropriate child management methods.



## Singapore Pre-School Accreditation Framework



*We may not be able to prepare the future for our children, but we can at least prepare our children for the future*

*- Franklin D. Roosevelt*



**Q1. I see banners outside some child care centres and kindergartens showing that they are “SPARK-certified”. What is SPARK certification?**

The Singapore Pre-school Accreditation Framework (SPARK) is a quality assurance framework introduced to raise the quality of pre-schools in Singapore.

SPARK aims to provide recognition and support for pre-schools in their efforts to improve quality in teaching and learning, administration and management processes in the centre. It serves as a benchmark for pre-schools in their journey towards raising quality programmes in teaching and learning, as well as to help parents make informed choices in their selection of pre-schools.

## Q2. Is SPARK certification compulsory?

Participation in SPARK assessment is voluntary. However, ECDA strongly encourages pre-schools to embark on their journey towards quality improvement. When pre-schools carry the SPARK logo, it is an endorsement of their centre quality.

## Q3. How would I know whether a centre is SPARK-certified?

You may access the list of SPARK-certified centres at our Child Care Link website, [www.childcarelink.gov.sg/ccls/home/CCLS\\_HomeSpark.jsp](http://www.childcarelink.gov.sg/ccls/home/CCLS_HomeSpark.jsp) or Preschools Connect website at <http://preschool.edu.sg>.

Alternatively, you may find child care centres nearby your home that have attained SPARK certification via our search engine at [www.childcarelink.gov.sg](http://www.childcarelink.gov.sg) by selecting the 'Advanced Search' and checking the 'SPARK-certified' box.

A SPARK-certified centre will have a SPARK banner displayed outside their centre.



# Staff Matters



*Ignite the passion in the hearts of the children to light the start of their lives' journey*

*- Ms Peggy Zee  
Early Childhood Consultant*



### Q1. What are 'staff-child ratios' ?

It refers to the minimum number of staff in charge of a group of children during programme hours based on the children's ages. The ratios stipulated as per licensing requirements are as follows:-

| Age of Children<br>(Group / class type)  | Staff to Children Ratio  |                       |
|--|--------------------------|-----------------------|
|  | (without para-personnel) | (with para-personnel) |
| 18 months and below (Infant)   | 1:5                      | Not Applicable        |
| Above 18 – 30 months (Playgroup)   | 1:8                      | 1 + 1 : 12            |
| Children attaining 3 years of age in the calendar year when the class commences (Nursery 1)      | 1:12                     | 1 + 1 : 18            |
| Children attaining 4 years of age in the calendar year when the class commences (Nursery 2)      | 1:15                     | 1 + 1 : 20            |
| Children attaining 5 years of age in the calendar year when the class commences (Kindergarten 1) | 1:20                     | 1 + 1 : 25            |
| Children attaining 6 years of age in the calendar year when the class commences (Kindergarten 2) | 1:25                     | 1 + 1 : 30            |

Staffing refers to trained staff with the relevant qualifications.

## Q2. Who are considered as para-personnel?

Para-personnel assist in improving the quality of staff-child interactions as well as the quality of care in the classrooms.

Para-educarers refer to personnel who work with educarers in the care and development of children from the ages of 18 months to 48 months.

Para-educators refer to personnel who work with teachers in the care and development of children in the Kindergarten classes.

Para-personnel perform the following functions:-

- assist teachers in the care and development of children;
- preparation and supervision of activities;
- assist in routine care and administrative / clerical support where required;
- assist in curriculum planning, parent involvement programmes, parent-teacher meetings and preparation of portfolios and observations.



## Q3. What are the training requirements for teachers and para-personnel?



The minimum training level requirements are as follows:

| Age of Children (Group / Class type) | Educarers/Teachers   | Para-educarers/educators                           |
|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Infant                               | Certificate in Infant and Toddler Care                               | Not Applicable                                     |
| Playgroup                            | Certificate in Early Childhood Care and Education                    | Fundamentals in Early Childhood Care and Education |
| Nursery 1                            | Certificate in Early Childhood Care and Education                    | Fundamentals in Early Childhood Care and Education |
| Nursery 2                            | Certificate/Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education (Teaching) | Fundamentals in Early Childhood Care and Education |
| Kindergarten 1 & 2                   | Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education (Teaching)             | Certificate in Early Childhood Care and Education  |



#### **Q4. How do I know if the staff taking care of my child is qualified?**

You may approach the centre's supervisor to discuss the staff's professional qualifications. Staff who are not trained at the Certificate or Diploma level usually perform the role of para-educators / educarers. They assist child care teachers to conduct daily activities and in the general supervision of children.



## Subsidy Matters





*Children are likely to live up to what you believe of them.*

*- Lady Bird Johnson*



## Q1. What are the government subsidies for a child enrolled in a child care centre?

Singapore Citizen children enrolled in Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA)-licensed child care centres are eligible for subsidies.

There are two available subsidies:

1. **Basic Subsidy** - for all Singapore Citizen children
2. **Additional Subsidy** - for families with household income (HHI) not exceeding \$7,500 or per capita income (PCI) not exceeding \$1,875.

The subsidy amount your child is eligible for depends on the working status of the mother<sup>1</sup> and the family's income:

| Type of Programme  | Working mother |                     | Non-working mother |                     |
|--|----------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
|  | Basic Subsidy  | Additional Subsidy* | Basic Subsidy      | Additional Subsidy* |
| Infant Care (for infants between 2 to 18 months)             | Up to \$600    | Up to \$540         | Up to \$150        | Not applicable      |
| Child Care (for children between 18 months to below 7 years) | Up to \$300    | Up to \$440         |                    |                     |

\* The Additional Subsidy is only available for families with working mothers and a household or per capita income not exceeding \$7,500 or \$1,875 respectively.

<sup>1</sup> If the mother has passed away or the father has the care and control of the child following a divorce, the subsidy amounts will depend on the father's working status. If both parents are absent, the subsidy amounts will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

## Q2. Who qualifies as a Working Mother?

A working mother is a mother who works at least 56 hours per month.

## Q3. What are Household Income (HHI) and Per Capita Income (PCI) and how are they calculated?

### HOUSEHOLD INCOME (HHI)

HHI<sup>2</sup> is the average monthly income of both parents.

*If you are a salaried employee receiving CPF contributions, your average monthly income is based on income received over the latest 12-month period. This income includes bonuses, commissions, overtime pay and allowances<sup>3</sup>*

Information used in this calculation is obtained from the Central Provident Fund Board, with your consent given in the subsidy application form

*If you are self-employed, your monthly income is taken from your total income assessed by the Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore (IRAS) in your latest Notice of Assessment*

<sup>2</sup> In the case of divorced or single parent, the parent's sole income is used to calculate household and per capita income.

<sup>3</sup> Divorce maintenance, National Service (NS) allowance and reimbursement are not included in the calculation of household income.



### PER CAPITA INCOME (PCI)

If your household has 5 or more family members including **at least 3** dependents with no income, you may choose to apply for the Additional Subsidy through PCI.

All family members included in your application must be:

- related by blood, marriage and/or legal adoption
- living in the **same** residential address stated on the NRIC of the main applicant.

ECDA confirms the incomes of all family members included in your application through:

- screening with CPF Board if you are a salaried employee or
- average income based on latest Notice of Assessment if you are self-employed

The PCI is calculated according to the formula below:

$$\text{Per Capita Income (PCI)} = \frac{\text{Total gross monthly household income of family members}}{\text{Number of family members living in the same household}}$$

## Q4. How much Additional Subsidy can I receive?

The Additional Subsidy amount is the Maximum Additional Subsidy for your family's HHI or PCI calculation in Column B of the subsequent Tables 1 – 2A except in the following two situations:

- If the Basic and maximum Additional Subsidy reduces the fee below the minimum co-payment amount, the Additional Subsidy will be adjusted such that the family pays the minimum co-payment amount (Column A).

### Example

A family of 5 has a PCI of \$600. The full day childcare fee is \$710 (with GST).

|  |       |  |
|--|-------|--|
| Fee                                      | \$710 | } While the subsidy cap for the family's HHI tier is \$440, the Additional Subsidy given is \$407 because the fees after subsidy must be at least the minimum co-payment amount of \$3 |
| Basic Subsidy                            | \$300 |  |
| Fee after Basic Subsidy                  | \$410 |  |
| Additional Subsidy                       | \$407 |  |
| Fees payable (Minimum co-payment amount) | \$3   |  |

- The Additional Subsidy cannot exceed the maximum subsidy receivable as a percentage of fees after basic subsidy (Column C).

### Example

A family of 4 has an HHI of \$3,400. The full day childcare fee is \$710 (with GST).

|                         |       |   |
|-------------------------|-------|---|
| Fee                     | \$710 | } While the subsidy cap for the family's HHI tier is \$370, the Additional Subsidy given is \$369 because the additional subsidy cannot exceed 90% of fees after basic subsidy (i.e. 90% x \$410) |
| Basic Subsidy           | \$300 |   |
| Fee after Basic Subsidy | \$410 |   |
| Additional Subsidy      | \$369 |   |
| Fees payable            | \$41  |   |

| HHI   | PCI             | Basic Subsidy | Minimum payment required of Parents (Column A) | Maximum Additional Subsidy (Column B) | Maximum Subsidy Receivable as a % of fees after Basic Subsidy (Column C) |
|---|-----------------|---------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Table 1: Full Day Child Care Programme</b>   |                 |               |  |                                       |  |
| \$2500 & below                                  | \$625 & below   | \$300         | \$3  | \$440                                 | 99%  |
| \$2501 - \$3000                                 | \$626 - \$750   |               | \$6  | \$400                                 | 98%  |
| \$3001 - \$3500                                 | \$751 - \$875   |               | \$32   | \$370                                 | 90%  |
| \$3501 - \$4000                                 | \$876 - \$1000  |               | \$63   | \$310                                 | 80%  |
| \$4001 - \$4500                                 | \$1001 - \$1125 |               | \$95   | \$220                                 | 70%  |
| \$4501 - \$7500                                 | \$1126 - \$1875 |               | \$215  | \$100                                 | 50%  |
| Above \$7500                                    | Above \$1875    |               | N.A  | N.A                                   | N.A  |
| <b>Table 1A: Half Day Child Care Programme</b>  |                 |               |  |                                       |  |
| \$2500 & below                                  | \$625 & below   | \$150         | \$2  | \$220                                 | 99%  |
| \$2501 - \$3000                                 | \$626 - \$750   |               | \$3  | \$200                                 | 98%  |
| \$3001 - \$3500                                 | \$751 - \$875   |               | \$16   | \$185                                 | 90%  |
| \$3501 - \$4000                                 | \$876 - \$1000  |               | \$32   | \$155                                 | 80%  |
| \$4001 - \$4500                                 | \$1001 - \$1125 |               | \$48   | \$110                                 | 70%  |
| \$4501 - \$7500                                 | \$1126 - \$1875 |               | \$108  | \$50                                  | 50%  |
| Above \$7500                                    | Above \$1875    |               | N.A  | N.A                                   | N.A  |
| <b>Table 2: Full Day Infant Care Programme</b>  |                 |               |  |                                       |  |
| \$2500 & below                                  | \$625 & below   | \$600         | \$60   | \$540                                 | 99%  |
| \$2501 - \$3000                                 | \$626 - \$750   |               | \$100  | \$500                                 | 98%  |
| \$3001 - \$3500                                 | \$751 - \$875   |               | \$130  | \$470                                 | 90%  |
| \$3501 - \$4000                                 | \$876 - \$1000  |               | \$190  | \$410                                 | 80%  |
| \$4001 - \$4500                                 | \$1001 - \$1125 |               | \$280  | \$320                                 | 70%  |
| \$4501 - \$7500                                 | \$1126 - \$1875 |               | \$400  | \$200                                 | 50%  |
| Above \$7500                                    | Above \$1875    |               | N.A  | N.A                                   | N.A  |
| <b>Table 2A: Half Day Infant Care Programme</b> |                 |               |  |                                       |  |
| \$2500 & below                                  | \$625 & below   | \$300         | \$30   | \$270                                 | 99%  |
| \$2501 - \$3000                                 | \$626 - \$750   |               | \$50   | \$250                                 | 98%  |
| \$3001 - \$3500                                 | \$751 - \$875   |               | \$65   | \$235                                 | 90%  |
| \$3501 - \$4000                                 | \$876 - \$1000  |               | \$95   | \$205                                 | 80%  |
| \$4001 - \$4500                                 | \$1001 - \$1125 |               | \$140  | \$160                                 | 70%  |
| \$4501 - \$7500                                 | \$1126 - \$1875 |               | \$200  | \$100                                 | 50%  |
| Above \$7500                                    | Above \$1875    |               | N.A  | N.A                                   | N.A  |

You can also use the online calculator to estimate the amount of Additional Subsidy to which your child is entitled.

However, the actual entitlement amount is based on the household or per capita income that is calculated when you apply for the subsidies.

You can use the calculator through the following link:

[https://www.childcarelink.gov.sg/ccls/home/Subsidy\\_Calculator.jsp](https://www.childcarelink.gov.sg/ccls/home/Subsidy_Calculator.jsp)

## Q5. How do I apply for the Infant/Child Care Subsidies?

1. Choose a child care centre for your child
2. Complete the enrolment/subsidy application form provided by the child care centre, attach all the supporting documents and return to the centre
3. Ensure your mobile number is provided in the application form
4. Wait for an SMS notification on the outcome of your application
5. If no SMS is received within 1 month of submitting the form, inform the child care centre staff

Note:

- > You need copies of the following supporting documents to enrol in a child care centre and apply for subsidies:
  - o NRICs of parents
  - o Birth certificate of your child
  - o Certificate of Citizenship if applicable



- > If you<sup>4</sup> are self-employed, you need to declare your household income and total working hours per month in your application for a subsidy.
- > If you are a salaried employee, you also need to declare employment details such as the name of your employer, their address and contact number as well as your working hours.

You will receive a subsidy as soon as your application is approved by ECDA. You will then only need to pay the monthly subsidised child care fee to the centre i.e. the child care fee less the Government subsidy.

## Q6. How will I know if my application is successful?

You will be notified by SMS of the subsidy amount given as soon as your application is approved. You can contact the centre staff for an update on the status of your application.

Your centre must issue a receipt to inform you of the subsidies and any discounts that are subtracted from the centre's fees.

<sup>4</sup> If you are a mother going through a separation/divorce proceeding, a divorced parent or a guardian, you will need to submit relevant legal documents. These documents may be the Court Order for the finalisation of divorce stating the parent with the care and control of your child, initiation of the divorce proceeding, or Deed of Separation.

### **Q7. How will the Infant/Child Care subsidies be paid?**

Subsidies will be paid to the child care centre every month.

You should only pay the subsidised child care fees i.e. child care centre's fees less the total subsidies given.

### **Q8. What other requirements or conditions are needed in order to receive Infant/Child Care subsidies?**

Your child must meet the minimum attendance requirement of 1 day per month at the centre to continue to receive the subsidies. If your child does not attend one day per month, the subsidies will not be paid out and parents will have to pay the full fee without subsidies.

### **Q9. Will my child be eligible for Infant/Child Care subsidies during trial enrolment?**

If 2 or more weeks of programme fees are charged, subsidies will be applied for the period of the trial enrolment.

### **Q10. Will my income be assessed on a yearly basis?**

No. Your household/per capita income will be assessed at fixed points to confirm your child's eligibility to continue receiving the Additional Subsidy.

If your child enrolls in infant care and continues towards child care, there are 3 points of assessment. When your child:

1. Enrolls in infant care
2. Changes programme from infant to child care
3. Ends N2 level (in the year your child turns 4)

If your child enrolls in child care, there are 2 points of assessment. When your child:

1. Enrolls in child care
2. Ends N2 level (in the year your child turns 4)

If your child withdraws from a centre and enrolls in another centre, ECDA will also re-assess your income when you enrol in the new centre.



**Q11. What if my income level changes after I have submitted my application for the Additional Subsidy?**

You can submit a request through your child care centre to re-assess your income and subsidies at any time.

**Q12. Do I need to inform the child care centre if there is a change in my employment status?**

Yes. You must inform the child care centre of changes in your employment status. You can do this by either:

- declaring your employment status to the centre or
- making a statutory declaration indicating your employment status and total working hours per month if you are self-employed.



**Q13. Both my child and I have recently become Singapore Citizens. Will my child be eligible for Infant/Child Care subsidies?**

Government subsidies will be granted from the month that your child attains Singapore Citizenship, provided all other eligibility criteria are met. You must inform the child care centre and submit copies of the supporting documents so ECDA can confirm your child's eligibility for the subsidy.

The supporting documents you need to provide are:

1. Parents' NRICs or Certificate of Citizenship
2. Certificate of Citizenship of child.

**Q14. Will my child be eligible for working mothers' Infant/Child Care subsidies if the mother is not working due to extenuating circumstances?**

You may submit an application through the child care centre with supporting documents such as a:

- Retrenchment letter for an involuntary end of employment or
- Medical report or memo signed by the doctor if you are unfit to work

The centre staff will apply to ECDA to consider a subsidy on your behalf. All appeals are considered on a case-by-case basis and you will be notified of the outcome of the appeal through the centre.

This page is intentionally left blank.

## Annex – Useful Contacts



*If you want your children to improve, let them overhear the nice things you say about them to others.*

*- Haim Ginott*



## Useful Contacts

As the child care centre that your child is enrolled in is the first point of contact, parents are advised to consult the child care centre first should you have any doubts or queries concerning the centre's programme, administration or any other issues relating to your child.

Alternatively, you may refer to the list of agencies / authorities you can approach should you need further clarification or advice on specific matters.





## Children Matters

### Child Protection

Agency/Authority: Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF)  
Contact: 1800-777 0000  
Website: [www.msf.gov.sg](http://www.msf.gov.sg)

### Children with Special Needs

Agency/Authority: SG Enable  
Contact: 1800-858 5885  
Website: [www.sgenable.sg](http://www.sgenable.sg)  
Email: [contactus@sgenable.sg](mailto:contactus@sgenable.sg)

### Custody of Children

Agency/Authority: Family Court  
Website: [app.subcourts.gov.sg/family/index.aspx](http://app.subcourts.gov.sg/family/index.aspx)

### Parenting and Family Schemes

Agency/Authority: Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF)  
Contact: 6355 5000  
Website: [www.msf.gov.sg](http://www.msf.gov.sg)

## Environment Matters

### Environment-Vector Control (e.g. Mosquitoes)

Agency/Authority: National Environment Agency (NEA) for child care centres located in private premises  
Contact: 1800-225 5632  
Website: [www.nea.gov.sg](http://www.nea.gov.sg)

## Financial Matters

### Baby Bonus / Child Development Account (CDA)

Agency/Authority: Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF)  
Contact: 1800-253 7707  
Email: [msf\\_babybonus@msf.gov.sg](mailto:msf_babybonus@msf.gov.sg)

### Child Care Subsidy Issues

Agency/Authority: Early Childhood Development Agency  
Contact: 6735 9213  
Website: [www.childcarelink.gov.sg](http://www.childcarelink.gov.sg)  
Email: [Contact@ecda.gov.sg](mailto:Contact@ecda.gov.sg)

### Small Claims Tribunal

Agency/Authority: The Subordinate Courts of Singapore  
Website: [app.subcourts.gov.sg/sct/index.aspx](http://app.subcourts.gov.sg/sct/index.aspx)

## Health Matters

### Infectious Diseases

Agency/Authority: Ministry of Health (MOH)  
Contact: 1800-2254122  
Website: [www.moh.gov.sg](http://www.moh.gov.sg)

### Nutrition for Children

Agency/Authority: Health Promotion Board (HPB)  
Contact: 6435 3500  
Website: [www.hpb.gov.sg](http://www.hpb.gov.sg)

## Transport Matters

### Transportation of Child / Traffic Problems

Agency/Authority: Land Transport Authority (LTA)  
Contact: 1800-225 5582  
Website: [www.lta.gov.sg](http://www.lta.gov.sg)





We would like to express our appreciation to the following organisations for the photographs:-

My First Skool  
The Little Skool-House International Private Limited  
Learning Vision @ Work Pte Ltd  
Odyssey The Global Preschool Pte Ltd  
Pat's Schoolhouse Pte Ltd  
Modern Montessori International Pte Ltd  
Brighton Montessori Centres Pte Ltd



**Early Childhood**  
Development Agency

[www.ecda.gov.sg](http://www.ecda.gov.sg)

Hotline: 6735 9213