Once you have narrowed your choices, the OCFS website and your local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency provide the following information: program name; license/registration number; address; school district; county; type of care provided; hours of operation; compliance history over a two year period; whether they are approved to administer medication; and contact information should you have additional questions.

OCFS Child Care Search Database:
ocfs.ny.gov/main/childcare/ccfs_template.asp

Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies:
ocfs.ny.gov/main/childcare/referralagencies.asp
CCR&Rs are also listed under “child care” in local directories.

Help in paying for child care:
You may be eligible for child care assistance. To obtain more information, contact your local Department of Social Services
ocfs.ny.gov/main/childcare/localdss.asp.

Finally, if you have concerns about a child care provider, call the Child Care Complaint line at 1-800-732-5207 or in New York City at (646) 632-6101.
Do you have a license or registration to care for children?

Licensed or registered home-based child care programs care for children ages six weeks through 12 years and operate for more than three hours a day on a regular basis. Some also offer non-traditional hours, including nights and weekends. The number of children they care for is specified on their license/registration. More information can be found on the OCFS website.

If you don't have a license or registration, why not?

There are a few exemptions from licensing or registration in New York State. Unlicensed/unregistered caregivers, like a relative or neighbor, can operate legally as long as they:

- care for only one or two children at a time, in addition to any of their own children; or
- care for three or more non-relative children for less than three hours per day per child;
- do not care for subsidized children.

How many children do you care for, and what are their ages?

There's a big difference between caring for four infants and caring for four 5-year-olds. Infants require more attention. Caregivers should be able to meet the needs of all the children they watch.

Background checks

All caregivers working in licensed and registered programs and anyone over 18 years old living in the home are required to be fingerprinted and undergo New York State criminal history and child abuse and maltreatment background checks, and newer caregivers are also subject to an additional layer of background checks.

If you are choosing a program that is not licensed or registered, the following databases can help you research the background of the caregiver and other adults living in the home:

- New York State Public Registry of Sex Offenders: criminaljustice.ny.gov/nsor
- New York State Department of Corrections & Community Supervision: nysdoccslookup.doccs.ny.gov
- New York State Police Wanted Persons: troopers.ny.gov
- FBI Wanted Persons: fbi.gov/newyork

Is the home childproofed?

Look around the home to make sure it has been childproofed. Poisonous and harmful items, like cleaners and medicines, should be secured out of reach. Electrical sockets should be covered, cabinets containing unsafe items should have childproof locks, safety gates should be on stairs, and hanging cords from blinds should be secured out of reach. Licensed and registered child care programs are required to comply with OCFS regulations regarding these and other safety measures and are monitored for compliance.

How do you put infants down for a nap?

All infants should be placed on their backs to sleep, and never on their stomachs unless a doctor instructs otherwise. Safe sleep guidelines from the American Academy of Pediatrics help reduce the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Many licensed/registered programs have training on the subject of safe sleep.

What kind of sleeping environment do you provide for infants?

Cribs and bedding used by licensed and registered child care programs must meet all federal and state safety standards. Cribs, bassinets and other sleeping areas for infants must not have bumper pads, toys, large stuffed animals, heavy blankets, pillows, wedges or other infant positioners unless medically required. In addition, propping bottles is prohibited.

Will my child be driven in a car?

Licensed/registered child care programs must provide parents with a schedule of outings, obtain written parental permission, and ensure children have proper child safety seats.

Additional things to consider:

Parents may also want to ask potential caregivers about:

- Their qualifications and training;
- The daily schedule and activities;
- What types of meals/snacks are provided; and
- How/when children are disciplined.
- Fees for child care services