

Finding a Child Care Center Site

Introduction:

This guide is a result of many inquiries about finding real estate professionals to help find child care space. Although there are many options when seeking assistance to purchase or lease real estate, very few real estate experts are familiar with the specific space requirements for child care facilities. However, with guidance and clear articulation of your real estate needs, you can use the services of real estate professionals to find the appropriate site. In addition to providing some guidance on how to work with real estate professionals, this document includes a list of useful local resources and websites that can assist in your search.

Preliminary Steps

Before selecting a site for your new child care program, you need to develop a business plan to ensure the program's successful operation. Your business plan should clearly address the following issues:

- Child Care Business Management Experience
- Market Demand and Supply
- Financial Viability
- Available Workforce

Real Estate Professionals and Other Local Groups

When talking to real estate professionals, start by making a list of the qualities your ideal site should have (use the resources listed above to help). At a minimum, be sure to think about your projected enrollment and the number of square feet you will need for each classroom; non-program space such as offices and meeting rooms; accessible, exclusive outdoor space; ADA accessibility, fire code compliance; transportation routes and drop-off/pick-up areas. The California Association of Realtors can assist in finding a commercial or residential realtor in your area.

- California Association of Realtors-- <http://www.car.org/>

It is also essential that you check with your Planning Department for local zoning ordinances to ensure that any site you consider is adequately zoned for a child care center.

When calling other agencies, don't just tell them you're looking for a site to operate a child care center. Always describe your space requirements in detail. Let your fingers do the walking. Most of the agencies listed below can be found in the government section or yellow pages of your local phone book.

- ❑ **Local Government:** Most cities and counties have real estate departments, and some have surplus property. If you can't find the real estate department listed, start with the City Manager's office. Don't forget to ask for land or buildings the municipality may have at a reduced rate for your community service.
- ❑ **School District:** To meet the needs of growing communities, overcrowded schools, and maintenance of quality learning environments, school districts are constantly assessing their need for construction and modernization. Most County Offices of Education have Facility Planners who meet regularly to discuss how to address these issues in their community. Contact your local Office of Education or School District to find out how you can get involved in the planning efforts. This might be a great opportunity to meet with them and discuss the possibility of incorporating a center into new or renovated school plans (http://www.cashnet.org/meetings/county_efp_meetings.html).
- ❑ **Public Housing:** Housing Authorities throughout the state strive to insure the low-income tenants they house have access to services that will help advance their economic situation. Child care is one of those vital services since it enables parents to work and provides children with a strong developmental foundation. Contact your local Housing Authority to see if there is an unused community room or space to construct a child center in any of their developments. <http://www.hcd.ca.gov/hpd/hrc/tech/contacts.htm>
- ❑ **Affordable Housing Developers:** Community based housing developers may be interested in partnering with you to locate child care centers in their affordable housing developments. Either of the following organizations may help you identify a local affordable housing developers) www.scanph.org, www.nonprofithousing.org, www.kennedycommission.org, www.housingsandiego.org, www.calruralhousing.org, and www.housingca.org. In addition, your city's Office of Housing, Community Development or Redevelopment Agency may be able to tell you which developers are undertaking new affordable housing construction projects.
- ❑ **Commercial Developers:** Similarly, commercial developers may be interested in including a child care center in their projects. You may get referrals from your city's Economic Development agency, or find a commercial developer in your area through the California Commercial Property Association <http://www.cbpa.com/about.asp>, or California Redevelopment Association, <http://www.calredevelop.org/index.htm>
- ❑ **Faith-based or other community organizations:** Churches and other faith-based organizations often make below-market rate space available for child care. Other neighborhood organizations, such as community centers, may also be interested in

providing space for your center. These opportunities are often found through local contacts, or by thoroughly exploring a target neighborhood.

Additional Existing Resources

Below is a list of resources to help guide your search for an appropriate site in which to operate a child care center:

- ❑ *Child Care Facility Site Selection*. Building Child Care.
<http://www.buildingchildcare.org/Final%20Child%20Care%20Facility%20Site%20Selection.pdf>
- ❑ *Head Start Resources: – even if you are not operating a Head Start program, the resources below are excellent for facilities planning*
 - Head Start Assessment of Properties
http://www.hsnrc.org/Facilities/assessment_of_properties.pdf
 - Head Start Design Guide – Chapter 5: Planning the Location and Space
<http://www.headstartinfo.org/publications/designguide/chapter5.htm>
 - *Head Start Facilities Manual* <http://www.bmcc.org/Headstart/Manuals/Facilities/>
- ❑ *California Community Licensing Child Care Center regulations*
http://www.dss.cahwnet.gov/ord/CCRTitle22_715.htm - scroll down to “Child Care Center” chapters

In conclusion, when searching for a site to build a child care center you must be creative, resourceful, and know your needs. Real estate professionals are only one source to assist you in the search process. Other local government and community organizations may be very useful.