

problem, one that is compounded by the number of mothers working outside the home. Over the past 40 years, there have been variable shifts in child care arrangements; whereas the majority of children are cared for in group centers or other settings, increasingly more children are being cared for in home settings.

The basic types of care are in-home care, either in the parents' or caregivers' home (family daycare), and center-based care, usually in a daycare center. In-home care may consist of a full-time babysitter who lives in the home, a full-time babysitter who comes to the home, cooperative arrangements such as exchange babysitting, or family daycare. A licensed small family child care home typically provides care and protection for up to six children for part of a 24-hour day and does not include informal arrangements, such as exchange babysitting or caregivers in the child's own home. The six children may include the family daycare provider's own children younger than 5 years old living in the home. Large family child care homes may provide care for 8 to 12 children. Unfortunately, many family daycare homes operate without a license and may care for large numbers of infants without adequate staff and facilities.

Child center-based care usually refers to a licensed daycare facility that provides care for six or more children for 6 or more hours in a 24-hour day. Work-based group care is another option that is becoming increasingly popular as employers recognize the benefit of providing high-quality and convenient child care to their employees. Sick-child care may also be available for times when children are ill. Such programs are often located in community hospitals or in work settings.

Nurses may fulfill a unique role in guiding parents in locating suitable facilities that have a well-qualified staff. State licensing agencies can help parents identify daycare centers that accept children of specific age groups and are convenient to home and work. Their records are available to the public and provide reports from the health, safety, and fire departments; periodic evaluations from the licensing agency; complaints filed against the center; and qualification of the center's employees. State-licensed programs are supposed to abide by established standards, which represent the minimum requirements and safeguards. However, enforcement of the standards is sometimes inadequate.

Early childhood programs may also belong to a voluntary