



Home-based child care helps babies thrive!

Home-based child care supports the development of babies and sets them up for futures where they thrive. It is the most common child care arrangement for babies.



Home-based child care is the preferred option for many families with infants because of the intimate setting.

More parents choose home-based child care for their infants than any other care type. Home-based care is often the [best or only option available for families](#) in rural areas and for families needing care during nontraditional hours, like evenings, nights, and weekends. This care is often the most familiar, flexible, convenient, personal, and affordable option for families.

Home-based child care is the most prevalent child care placement for infants and toddlers: **30% of infants and toddlers attend home-based child care** as their primary care arrangement. ([NSECE, 2019](#)).

“The first thing I noticed when I visited Patty Lord’s home-based child care is that she was wearing one baby and playing with a couple of toddlers at the same time. Every child was getting Patty’s love and attention. It just seemed like a natural and nurturing place for a baby.”

—Janelle Messer, North Carolina



Home-based child care stimulates infant brain development.

What makes home-based child care the preferred option for many families is not just the intimate setting it provides for young children but also the way it addresses the specific developmental needs of infants and toddlers. For babies and toddlers, that sense of **safety and belonging is the bedrock of both physical and mental health.**

“When the care is developmentally appropriate, children realize significant lifetime gains through better outcomes in education, health, social behaviors, and employment.”

—Dr. Brenda Jones Harden, Professor of Children and Families at the University of Maryland



At Harvard University's Center on the Developing Child, researchers characterize the healthy interaction between infants and their caregivers as **"serve and return"** — a series of volleys that builds a child's neural network and sparks critical connections that enable babies to keep learning and growing. This back-and-forth interaction is fundamental to the wiring of the brain, building essential pathways that support **language, motor skills, memory, emotional regulation,** and **behavioral control.**

The first thing Lisa Kemper, a parent who her enrolled 4-week old baby in Benu's Preschool, a home-based program, noticed was that the children all seemed to love Benu.

"The kids just all seemed to adore Benu because she would always talk to them and give them her full attention."

—Lisa Kemper, California

PATTY LORD RETURNS A "SERVE" FROM 2-YEAR-OLD ZAK. PHOTO CREDIT: ANNE VILEN



Home-based child care creates a sense of safety and security for babies.

The research is clear: the key ingredient for infants' social and intellectual development is a **secure attachment to a caregiver.** According to Dr. Jones Harden, that security leads to **better lifetime outcomes.**

When Janelle Messer got pregnant and had her son Siler, she initially arranged for her retired mother to care for him. But after a few months, when she needed more child care than her mom could provide, she remembered Patty in her living room.

"I chose Ms. Patty's over larger programs with more children, caregivers, and indoor space, because he connects with the same face and hands and heart every single day, just like he would if he were home with me. That's the security he needs, and the security I need to feel confident going to work."

—Janelle Messer, North Carolina

"What children need coming into the world is to be with a primary caregiver, or two, or three, including the parents. That security is the foundation for how you learn language, the foundation for whether you take a risk and solve a problem, the foundation for how you learn to self-regulate. The best place to get that is in a home environment, which could be the child's actual home, but can also be a home-based child care environment or a child care center that mimics the size and setup of a home."

—Dr. Brenda Jones Harden, Professor of Children and Families at the University of Maryland