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Owner-operator of Kreative Minds Child Care in Las Vegas.

❖ NEVADA

A Voice for Vulnerable Kids and Families

I've had a child care business since 2008, but the truth is I've been raising kids my entire adult life. I'm a mother of 13 and a grandmother of 17. My program grew out of my own experience as a parent — the desire to protect children, to understand them, and to make sure families never feel alone when something is hard. Today I run a licensed group home program in Las

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Vegas, where I care for up to 12 children. Many of the kids who walk through my door have disabilities or learning differences, and supporting them — and their families — is the heart of my work.

I started in Chicago, where I first opened my doors to families who needed safe, dependable care. In 2010 I moved to Indiana and ran two home programs and a center at the same time. I built a reputation for welcoming children other programs struggled to serve. In 2021 I relocated again and opened my Las Vegas program. Every move has taught me something about regulations, systems, and the gaps families fall through. What hasn't changed is my mission: children who need extra attention deserve someone who says yes.

I specialize in caring for children with autism, ADHD, and learning disabilities. Some of my children have Individualized Education Programs or 504 plans. I don't like labeling kids. I see many behaviors that adults call "problems" as misunderstandings. A child isn't trying to be difficult — they're overwhelmed, frustrated, or not being heard. My job is to slow down, observe, and figure out what that child is trying to communicate. Once we understand the why, everything shifts.

Because of that mindset, I've become an advocate as much as a caregiver. I sat with my parents and explained the IEP language. I help them prepare for school meetings so they understand what services their child should receive. Families often arrive exhausted and discouraged. They've been told what their child can't do. I show them what their child can do — and how to fight for the support that makes success possible. When parents calm down, children calm down. Everyone starts moving forward together.

My advocacy is personal. Six years ago my adult son was in an accident and became paralyzed from the waist down. I had to learn the medical system overnight: insurance appeals, equipment battles, transportation access. Today he lives independently, works, and navigates the world with dignity. That experience changed me. When I advocate for families now, I'm speaking from lived reality. I know how overwhelming it feels to fight systems that seem designed to wear you down. I also know that persistence works.

I bring that same persistence into my classroom. I'm a certified nursing assistant and medical assistant, and that training helps me understand children's health needs and developmental milestones. But the most important skill I bring is attention. I study with my kids. If a child is melting down, I analyze. Are they hungry? Overstimulated? Thirsty? Tired? Children communicate through behavior long before they have the words. When we meet the need behind the behavior, we teach trust.

Safety and emotional security come first in my program. I teach children to speak up for themselves. If something feels wrong, they should tell a parent, a teacher, a trusted adult. Too many children stay silent because they think no one will listen. I want my kids to grow up knowing their voices matter. That lesson is just as important as letters and numbers.

I also support families beyond child care hours. The parents call me for advice about discipline, school, and life. We talk about redirecting instead of yelling, we talk about respectful communication. I remind them that when children ask "why," they're not being disrespectful — they're learning.

Running a home-based business isn't easy. Funding systems change constantly. Subsidy payments are late. Food program rules grow more complicated every year. Health insurance is expensive. But I stay because the need is enormous. Families depend on stable child care to work, to breathe, to survive. When providers close, entire communities feel it. That's why I speak at meetings, organize with other providers, and travel to advocate for better policies. Childcare and health care aren't luxuries. They are lifelines. If we don't speak, decisions get made without us.

The impact shows up in the children. I think about a four-year-old in my care who arrived struggling to communicate and engage. Over three years she's blossomed — naming colors and shapes, recognizing letters, expressing herself clearly. Her parents tell me they see the difference every day. That growth isn't magic. It's patience, repetition, and belief. It's refusing to see a child as broken.

Families choose my program because I treat their children like my own. My home feels like home: structured, loving, and respectful. Children eat well, learn constantly, and feel seen. Parents leave for work knowing their kids are safe. That peace of mind is everything. After more than 15 years in this field, I still wake up ready to fight for the kids who need someone in their corner. My life — as a mother, caregiver, medical worker, and advocate — all flows into this work. Supporting children with disabilities isn't a specialty to me. It's a commitment to dignity. It's a promise to families that they are not alone. And it's the reason I keep my doors open every morning.