

What care is best for kids? [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

New research does not support the argument that children are better off when they're cared for in someone's home than when they're in a child-care centre.

That's the finding of a Waterloo research group dedicated to bringing research to the public and policy-makers.

"For the many Canadian parents with children enrolled in out-of-home day care, the . . . conclusions will come as reassuring news," says the Canadian Centre for Knowledge Mobilisation.

Home care in the study means nonparental care in a home setting.

In fact, it's not where children receive care, but the quality of their care that matters most to children's early development in cognition, language and behavior, said UW psychology Prof. Kathleen Bloom, director of the not-for-profit organization.

Over a year, centre researchers surveyed 66 scientific studies from five countries.

The studies, involving 28,000 children from infancy to eight years of age, linked the quality of child care with children's development.

Children's cognitive, language and behavioural development are better when they are in quality care, said the report, called the Research Guide to Child Care Decision Making.

But quality was more likely to be found in child-care centres where there are educated caregivers and engaging activities and learning materials, the centre's research says.

The centre admits it's wading into a area of controversy among parents and policy-makers.

"This is a very hot debate," Bloom said in an interview. But "my hope is decision-makers, whether parents or policy developers, would consider the evidence along with their beliefs."

Bloom said while other researchers have studied the connection between quality child care and children's development, "we're the first to do it in such a comprehensive manner.

"We did probably the largest study and we qualified the results and we're not child-care advocates," Bloom said, adding she was shocked by the strength of the results.

"The question is, what are we doing about high-quality child care?" Bloom said.

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- reprinted from the Waterloo Record

Related link: CCKM's research guide to child care decision making ^[2]

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