



National Childcare  
Accreditation Council

Online Family Survey Report

October 2009 – March 2010

## Executive Summary

---

On 21 October 2009, NCAC announced that services would be provided with the actual date of their Validation Visit and *Validation Surveys for Families* would cease to contribute to a service's Accreditation Decision.

In place of the hard copy *Surveys*, an online *Family Survey* was set up to allow families the opportunity to continue providing feedback about the quality of care at their child care service.

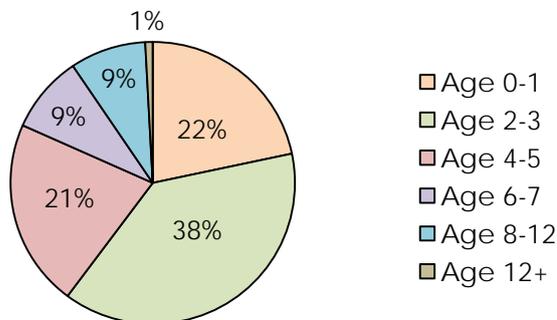
The following is a summary of the responses collected from participants in the online *Family Survey* from 15 October 2009 to 15 March 2010. This *Report* highlights the key issues and concerns for families choosing and using child care services in Australia.

There were 911 participants in the online *Family Survey* between 15 October 2009 and 15 March 2010. Of these, 672 (74%) indicated they were currently using child care, while 239 (26%) indicated they were not.

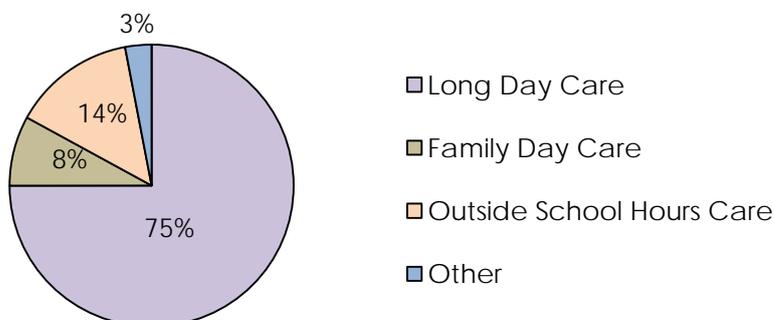
Participants were asked whether their service had been through Accreditation within the past 12 months. Of the 318 participants who answered this question, 50% responded 'Yes', 22% responded 'No' and 28% were unsure. Participants were also asked how they heard about NCAC. 32% discovered NCAC through an online search engine, 37% from their child care service and 10% from family and friends.

Of the 672 participants using child care, the ages of their children and the type of child care being used are profiled below:

### Age of children



### Type of child care used

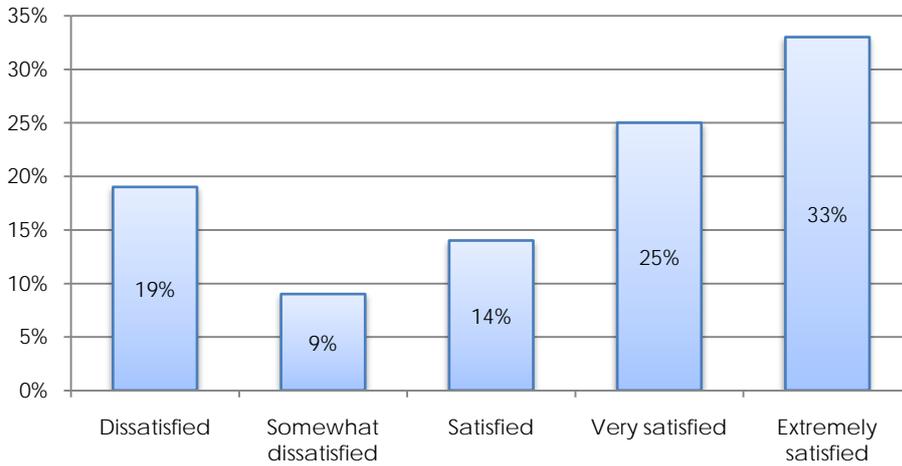


## Families' Perception of Child Care

---

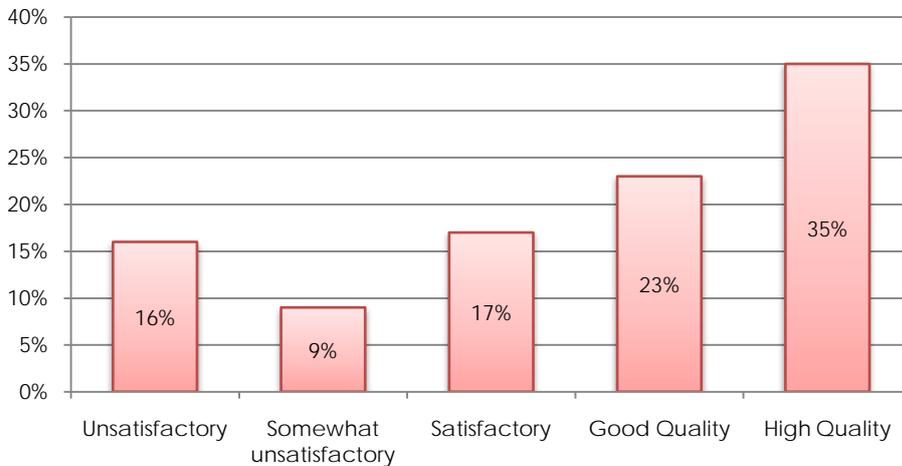
Participants in the Survey were asked questions about their perception of child care, rating satisfaction of their service and the overall quality of care at their service. 72% of families reported they were satisfied or more with their child care service and 75% felt the quality of their service was at least satisfactory.

**Overall family satisfaction**



**326** participants responded to this question.

**How families rate overall quality of their service**

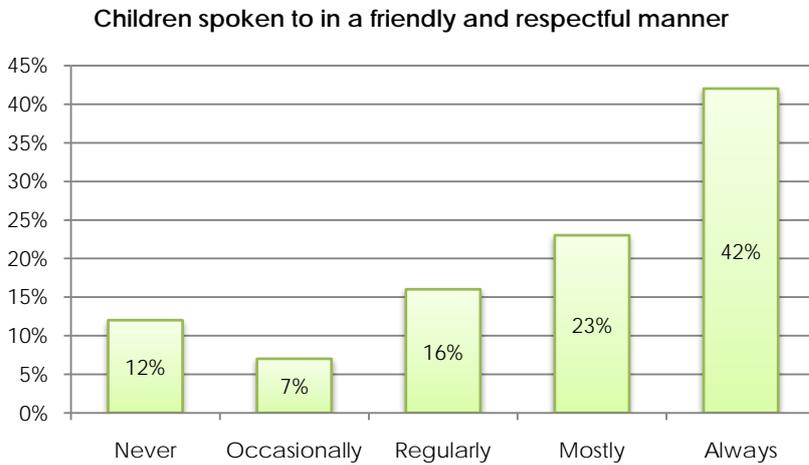


**325** participants responded to this question.

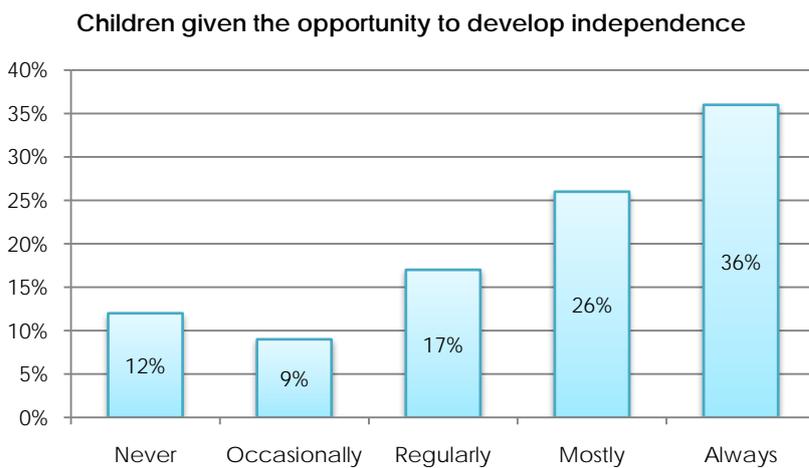
## Families' Perception of Child Care

---

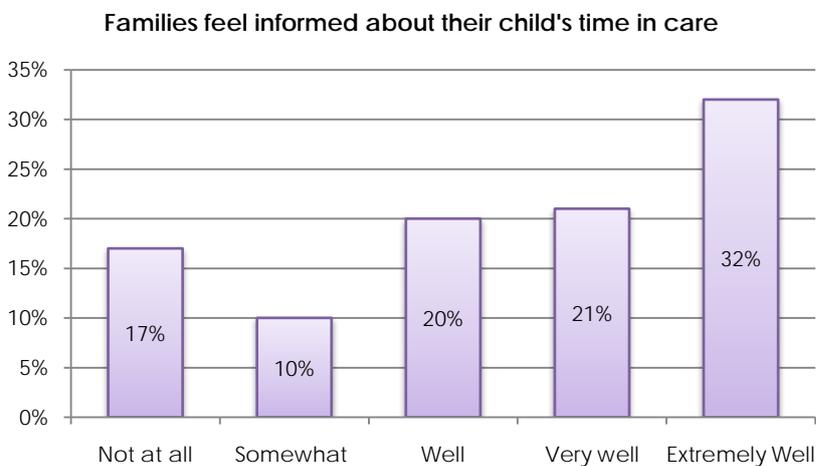
Participants were also asked about their perception of child care. Over 80% of families felt their child was spoken to in a warm, friendly and respectful manner, while 79% believed their child was given the opportunity to develop independence and social skills. 73% of families felt well informed about their child's time in the service.



**319** participants responded to this question.



**317** participants responded to this question.



**320** participants responded to this question.

## Important Criteria for Families

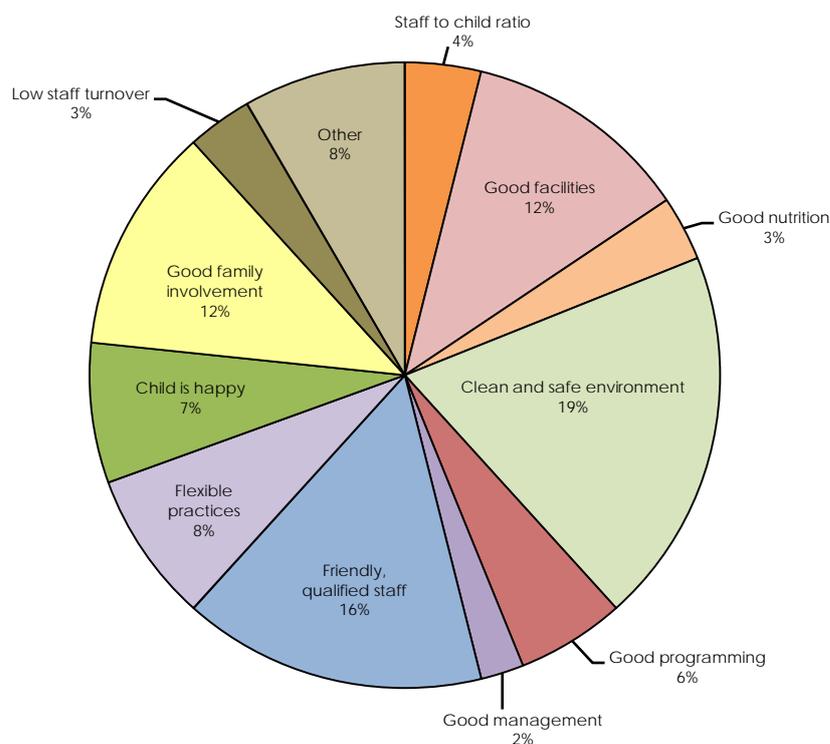
Participants were asked to rank the importance of selected criteria when choosing a child care service. These criteria included:

- Location: whether the service was close to home, school or work
- Staff: how they interacted with children, qualifications held
- Child's needs: catering to individual children's needs
- Planned programs: Having a planned program for day-to-day activities
- Number of children at the service
- Accredited service
- Days available for care
- Affordability/costs
- Recommendations from family and friends

Criteria	Not important	Somewhat important	Unsure	Important	Extremely important
Location	17%	5%	17%	24%	37%
Staff	16%	2%	1%	8%	73%
Child's needs	16%	1%	1%	15%	67%
Planned programs	16%	2%	13%	25%	44%
Number of children	18%	4%	18%	23%	37%
Accredited service	16%	2%	6%	18%	58%
Days available	15%	2%	12%	23%	48%
Affordability	18%	3%	15%	28%	36%
Recommendations	18%	6%	20%	26%	30%

Participants were also asked to comment on other criteria which they believed to be important when choosing a service.

### Additional important criteria



## Additional Important Criteria for Families

---

The following is a sample of the comments provided by families regarding additional important criteria when choosing a child care service.

**Child is happy:** *The child feels safe, happy and nurtured by his/her carer. That they are not discriminated against in any way or form.*

**Child is happy:** *Diversity in the program, with a focus on my child's interests and abilities. Loving and caring child carers who show empathy and understanding toward my child.*

**Clean and safe environment:** *Obviously the most important criteria is that our child is safe and well cared for. Then we look at the environment, the stimulation he is receiving, the relationship with the carers, food provided and the interaction with us.*

**Facilities:** *The outdoor environment is very important - I don't like the new types of centres just with soft fall and shade cloth, there is no natural environment to play in. It's probably cleaner and cheaper to maintain but it's definitely not as pleasant as trees, flowers and grass - surely some natural environment should rate highly in an Accreditation process.*

**Flexible practices:** *The other criteria that are important when choosing a child care service are the hours the centre operates and the quality and quantity of food the child receives throughout the day. Also if the centre caters for children who have special needs and the centre's educational program.*

**Flexible practices:** *Flexibility in hours. Many women work part time or casual, or rotating shifts and I have not yet encountered a service that offers this sort of flexibility.*

**Friendly, qualified staff:** *Whether staff are attentive enough, how they follow babies' routines, how they safeguard children from potential dangers, what they teach them even as babies, personal attention given (eg how long must a baby remain in a soiled/wet nappy before they change them), what happens when a baby/toddler is naughty, discipline methods, how they handle my baby when my baby gets ill, hygiene, cleanliness, food standards and preparation.*

**Good family involvement:** *How the staff coped with MY separation anxiety. Feedback on what day my son has had. Helping me cope with other problems that pop up, ie speech problems, school readiness.*

**Good family involvement:** *That they keep me informed about my child's day without me having to ask all the time. A place that makes me feel comfortable and welcome. For my child's differences to be respected. Consistent staff. Friendly faces with smiles.*

**Good programming:** *Clearly thought through philosophy so I understand the context in which programs are devised and delivered to the children and the premises upon which they are cared for. Investment in professional development, staff longevity and qualifications of staff at the centre, accessibility of the centre management to discuss parents' questions and concerns.*

**Good management:** *Management, currently the child care centre we use has great carers and facility but because of poor management and problems with accounts, and communication problems, it has forced me to consider other child care centres.*

**Good nutrition:** *Provide good quality food for afternoon tea, service available during holidays with a range of activities. Would like to see more services Accredited for vacation care that are not run by the schools for year 7 students as they are too young to leave on their own while their parents are working.*

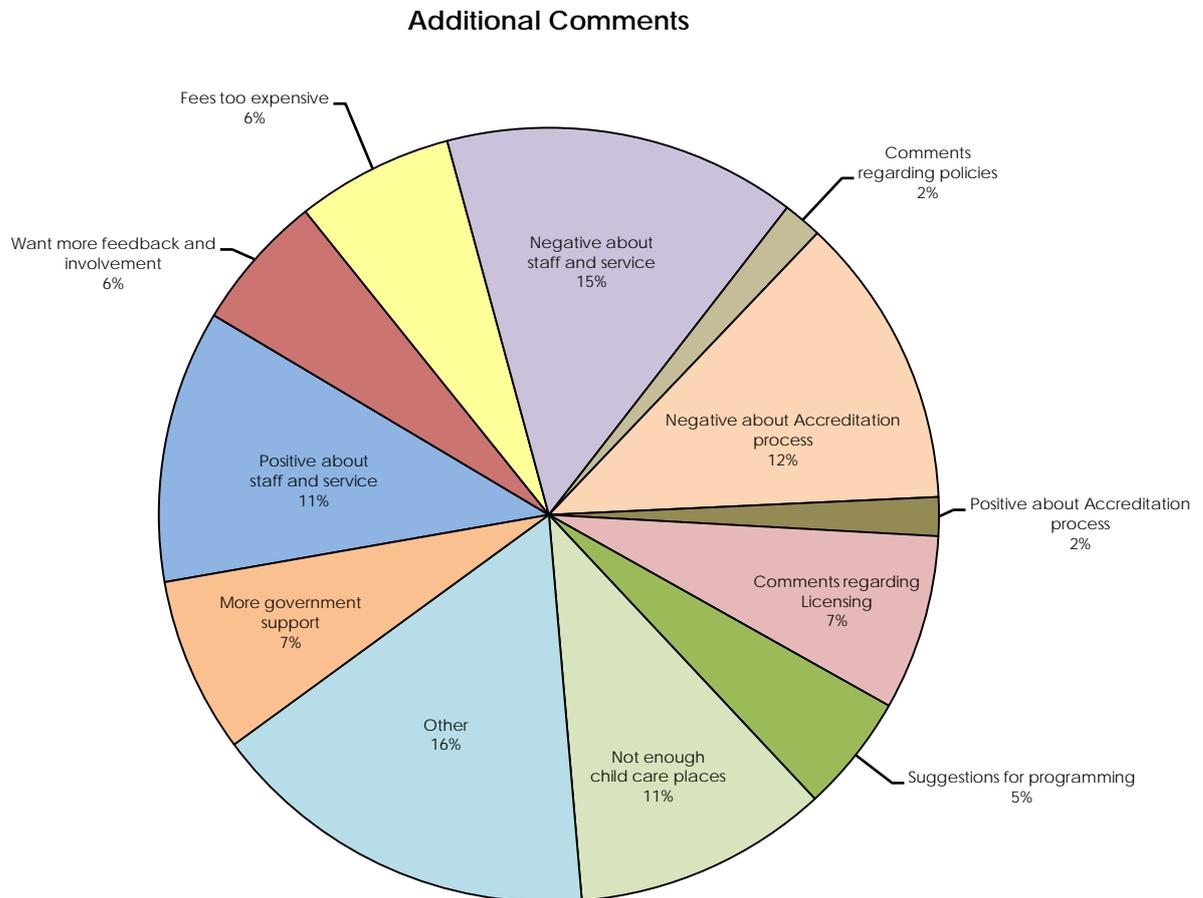
**Low staff turnover:** *Staff turnover and wellbeing - whether they are treated well by the employer and how much professional development is on offer and how they engage with parents.*

**Other:** *Sometimes you don't get a choice - you take what you can get - so the criteria that is most relevant is availability.*

## Additional Comments

---

Participants were given the opportunity to provide additional comments and feedback at the end of the Survey. There were 123 responses in this section. 15% of families provided negative feedback about their child care service and the educators at the service, and 12% provided negative feedback regarding the Accreditation process. Another major concern was the availability of child care places in their local areas.



## Additional Comments

---

The following is a sample of the comments and feedback provided at the end of the Survey.

**Fees too expensive:** *Affordability is a major issue. Private operators particularly in the OSHC sector are profit-driven, sometimes leaving the level of care sub-standard. The child care industry is a necessary evil for a lot of parents, however the ever increasing costs to parents who both work continually supports those people who do not work and have first preference when vacancies become available.*

**More government support:** *More spot checks should be done. Although the carers are doing the best they can there is often only Certificate 3 workers on site when the Diploma [educated] staff person is sick, away or has not started her shift yet. This concerns me greatly.*

**More government support:** *I think that child care centres need to be reviewed more consistently because when I went looking for child care for my little one, I found some to be appalling. Whilst this is a business it is also a highly ethical issue because you are dealing with children.*

**Negative about Accreditation process:** *I think Accreditation is a waste of time because the centre manager and coordinators are always on their best behaviour during an audit.*

**Negative about Accreditation process:** *I am extremely disappointed that the NCAC do not value parents' input on child care services. By taking away Parent Surveys as part of the Accreditation process there is no possible way that NCAC could accurately validate a service. I guarantee that centres which are not being run well now have more leeway to get away with it. I could only suggest that Parent Surveys of a centre be brought back and controlled by the NCAC, not the child care services for collection. This Family Survey also does not identify the service's names which parents are using, it only aids NCAC for data collection and statistics, not the quality of care provided by a child care service.*

**Not enough child care places:** *I have had my daughter's name on a waiting list for three years at one centre and have never been offered a spot. There is clearly a baby boom so we need more government funded/supported child care places.*

**Other:** *Child care should be charged by the hours you use, eg after school care, sometimes my husband can pick up my daughter after work but other times he cannot and I still pay full fees when I'm not even using it full time! Child care places should first go to working parents and then to parents who stay at home and want some time to themselves.*

**Other:** *We need to be training people in leadership roles, not just additional training (from Certificate 3 to Diploma). The Advanced Diploma is a step in the right direction however the lack of trained staff in the industry allows people that are still training to work in a role they are not yet ready for (ie variations through licensing). Too many times I have encountered staff that are fresh out of TAFE and have minimal on-the-job skills and knowledge.*

**Positive about staff and service:** *My children are active, social, independent and caring individuals which I attribute in part to the love, care and learning opportunities provided by their family day carer. They have developed a lasting relationship with their carer which continued after they moved on to school. Our lives have been enriched by the necessity of child care.*

**Positive about staff and service:** *I really appreciated the way my husband and I were treated when we came to inspect the service. The director personally showed us around and encouraged our daughter to explore the room she would be in and introduced her to the carers and other children. She has been going for nine months and she absolutely loves it. The staff are very professional and courteous and are always happy to talk about our daughter's progress.*

**Want more feedback and family involvement:** *The staff need strategies to help inform families about how they accommodate children's social and emotional needs, not just education and school readiness and show the importance of staff in this process and in the care they provide.*

## Family Survey

Thank you for participating in this survey. The information you provide will be anonymous and will assist NCAC in achieving our vision of quality experiences and positive outcomes for all children.

The survey will take approximately 2 to 3 minutes to complete.

If you have any questions or would like further information, contact NCAC on **(02) 8260 1900** or **1300 136 554** and speak with a **Child Care Adviser**.

### 1. Are you currently using child care?\*

Yes  No

### For families using child care:

### 2. How old are your children?

Select multiple age ranges if appropriate. Values are in years.

- 0 - 1
- 2 - 3
- 4 - 5
- 6 - 7
- 8 - 12
- 12 +

### 3. What type of child care are you using?

- Long Day Care
- Family Day Care
- Outside School Hours Care
- Other, please specify:

### 4. How important are each of the following criteria when choosing a child care service?

Please rate from 1 to 5 where **1 = Not Important** and **5 = Extremely important**.

	1	2	3	4	5
Location (for example, close to home, school or work)	<input type="radio"/>				
Staff (for example, how they interact with children, qualifications)	<input type="radio"/>				
Cater to my child's needs	<input type="radio"/>				
Having a planned program of day-to-day activities	<input type="radio"/>				
Number of children at the service	<input type="radio"/>				
Accredited service	<input type="radio"/>				
Days available for care	<input type="radio"/>				
Cost/Affordability	<input type="radio"/>				
Recommendation by friends/family	<input type="radio"/>				

**5. What other criteria are important when choosing a child care service?**

**6. Overall, how satisfied are you with your child's service?**

Please rate from 1 to 5 where 1 = Dissatisfied and 5 = Extremely Satisfied.

- 1    2    3    4    5

**7. How would you rate the overall quality of care at your child's service?**

Please rate from 1 to 5 where 1 = Unsatisfactory and 5 = High Quality.

- 1    2    3    4    5

**8. Are the children are spoken to in a warm, friendly and respectful manner?**

Please rate from 1 to 5 where 1 = Never and 5 = Always.

- 1    2    3    4    5

**9. How well are you kept informed about your child's time in the service?**

Please rate from 1 to 5 where 1 = Not at all and 5 = Extremely well.

- 1    2    3    4    5

**10. Does your service/carer provide your child with opportunities to develop independence and social skills?**

Please rate from 1 to 5 where 1 = Never and 5 = Always.

- 1    2    3    4    5

**11. Has your service been through Accreditation in the past 12 months?**

- Yes    No    I don't know

**12. Where did you hear about the NCAC website?**

- Online search engine
- Child care service
- Magazine advertisement
- Telephone directory online
- Telephone directory book
- Link from another website
- Friend/family
- Magazine/newspaper article
- Other, please specify:

**13. Are there any comments you would like to add about child care?**

## For families not currently using child care:

### 2. Are you currently looking for child care?\*

- Yes  No

### 3. What type of child care are you looking for?

- Long Day Care  
 Family Day Care  
 Outside School Hours Care  
 Other, please specify:

### 4. How important are each of the following criteria when choosing a child care service?

Please rate from 1 to 5 where 1 = **Not Important** and 5 = **Extremely Important**.

	1	2	3	4	5
Location (for example, close to home, school or work)	<input type="radio"/>				
Staff (for example, how they interact with children, qualifications)	<input type="radio"/>				
Cater to my child's needs	<input type="radio"/>				
Having a planned program of day-to-day activities	<input type="radio"/>				
Number of children at the service	<input type="radio"/>				
Accredited service	<input type="radio"/>				
Days available for care	<input type="radio"/>				
Cost/Affordability	<input type="radio"/>				
Recommendation by friends/family	<input type="radio"/>				

### 5. What other criteria are important when choosing a child care service?

### 6. Where did you hear about the NCAC website?

- Online search engine  
 Child care service  
 Magazine advertisement  
 Telephone directory online  
 Telephone directory book  
 Link from another website  
 Friend/family  
 Magazine/newspaper article  
 Other, please specify:

### 7. Are there any comments you would like to add about child care?