

Choosing an OSCAR service

Each OSCAR service will have different ways of running and offer a different kind of programme. Whether you have several services to choose from, or there is only one operating in your area, we recommend that you visit a service before enrolling and take time to ask questions and observe the programme. *We also suggest you read the previous section for an overview of how the OSCAR sector typically operates.*

Things to check out

- **MSD Approval:** does the service have MSD OSCAR Approval? (Click here to find out about MSD Approval.) This means that the services meets the MSD Standards for OSCAR. Just because the service uses the word “OSCAR” in its name, doesn’t mean it has MSD Approval. If the service is MSD Approved, you may be able to apply for OSCAR Fee Subsidy from Work and Income (click here for more information.)
- **Programme size and facilities:** how many children attend the service? Does the facility seem adequate for the number attending? Are there quiet areas for rest and relaxation? Is there access to suitable and safe outdoor space?
- **Staffing:** how many staff are on site? If the service is MSD Approved it will be required to have 2 staff on-site at all times, a centre-based ratio of 1 staff member to 10 children and on excursions a minimum of 1 to 8. Are they interacting with children? Do staff use a friendly and respectful and professional tone when talking to children?
- **Supervision procedures:** do staff appear well-positioned to supervise children? If children are outside, is there a staff member present too? Are younger children appropriately supervised? Where are the toilets that the children use?
- **Training & qualifications:** there are many competent OSCAR staff who do not have formal qualifications, but there should be at least a qualified first aider on site at all times. Have the staff had any other training for working with children and do they have any particular skills that they use in the programme e.g. sports, arts, music, cooking etc.
- **Enrolment:** your child/ren should be enrolled in writing and the service should collect important information like medical conditions and emergency contact numbers for other people who could be contacted if you were unable to get to the service.
- **Food and snacks:** what food and refreshments are served – what is the timing of snacks? Do the children have free access to drinking water? Do the food facilities appear hygienic and in good condition?
- **Programme and daily routine:** is there visible information on activities and the programme schedule? Is there a variety of activities available and how much choice do children have? Does there appear to be a reasonable provision of equipment and resources? Is there suitable space for active play, including when there is wet weather? How does the service cater for the interests and greater independence of older children?