



## GUIDE TO ACCREDITATION

If you've been researching your childcare options, then you've no doubt been hearing all about accreditation. Facilities prominently display certificates and proudly tell you they're accredited, and you smile and nod and say, "Great!" But what you're thinking is *What does your accreditation mean to me? What's with all the acronyms?* We'll give you the basics here as well as the resources to do further investigating on your own.

A **Child Care Accreditation Organization** is an organization that has set higher facility standards than state licensing required standards. These could be such things as lower teacher to student ratios, particular methods of learning, or classroom organization, just to name a few. A childcare facility wishing to become accredited must apply for accreditation, meet all the criteria set forth by the accreditation organization, and pass a thorough inspection.

There are numerous accreditation organizations around the country, all with different strengths and weaknesses. Some childcare facilities will become accredited in several different programs, but please know that just because a facility has an accreditation, that does not mean you can forego your own due diligence. Accreditation is not like [Licensing](#); there aren't any laws stating a facility must comply with their existing accreditation standards, only state licensing standards are enforced.

### EXAMPLE:

If the accreditation organization's ratio for infants is 3:1, and state licensing's ratio is 4:1, a facility can utilize the state ratio anytime without notice. Which means if the facility tells you they are XYZ accredited, when you do your tour, do a quick ratio count to see whose criteria they are actually practicing.



Now that you have a little background on accreditation, you can move on to the arduous task of deciphering the different standards of the different accreditation organizations. This is no small feat, and quite honestly, it's okay if you choose to skip this step of due diligence. You must remember that the most important thing about choosing a childcare facility is the care of your child, not the number of certificates on the wall.

The table on this page lists out the more common accreditation organization found in Texas. (If you live in a different state, be sure and check your state’s licensing website to find other state-level certifications or accreditations.)

Initials	Name of Accrediting Organization	Website
ACSI	Association of Christian Schools International	<a href="http://www.acsi.org">www.acsi.org</a>
ACTS	Association of Christian Teachers and Schools	<a href="http://www.ag.org/acts/index.cfm">www.ag.org/acts/index.cfm</a>
AMI	American Montessori International	<a href="http://www.montessori-ami.org">www.montessori-ami.org</a>
AMS	American Montessori Society	<a href="http://www.amshq.org">www.amshq.org</a>
APPLE	Accredited Professional Preschool Learning Environment	<a href="http://www.faccm.org/apple.asp">www.faccm.org/apple.asp</a>
COA	Council on Accreditation	<a href="http://www.coanet.org">www.coanet.org</a>
IAPM	International Association of Progressive Montessori	<a href="http://www.montessori.bc.ca">www.montessori.bc.ca</a>
MSAC	Montessori School Accreditation Commission	<a href="http://www.montessori-msac.org">www.montessori-msac.org</a>
NAA	National Afterschool Association	<a href="http://www.naaweb.org">www.naaweb.org</a>
NAC	National Association of Childcare Providers	<a href="http://www.naccp.org">www.naccp.org</a>
NACECPPP	National Accreditation Council for Early Childhood Professional Personnel and Programs	703-941-4329 (website unknown)
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children	<a href="http://www.naeyc.org">www.naeyc.org</a>
NAFCC	National Association for Family Child Care	<a href="http://www.nafcc.org">www.nafcc.org</a>
NECPA	Natioanl Early Childhood Program Accreditation	<a href="http://www.necpa.net">www.necpa.net</a>
NLSA	National Lutheran School Accreditation	<a href="http://www.lcms.org">www.lcms.org</a>
PAMS	Pan American Montessori Society	<a href="http://www.kennesaw.edu">http://www.kennesaw.edu</a>
Texas Rising Star	Texas Rising Star	<a href="http://www.twc.state.tx.us/svcs/childcare/provcert.html">www.twc.state.tx.us/svcs/childcare/provcert.html</a>

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