

How do I find a place to take care of my child?

In Japan, childcare facilities are basically divided into *kindergartens**¹ and *nursery schools**²

* 1 includes kindergartens authorized as educational facilities and the kindergarten part of certified centers for early childhood education and care

* 2 authorized nursery schools, the nursery school part of certified centers for early childhood education and care, and regional childcare services (small-scale childcare, home-like childcare, attached nursery schools)

Kindergartens (⇒see pg.6, 1 (3)) are facilities created to provide education for children as young as 3 years old during the day from around 9am to around 2pm. Some kindergartens provide childcare services for some time before and after their educational program, so that children can attend even if their parents work.

To enroll your child in a kindergarten, apply directly to the desired facility. You will need to pay the kindergarten's fees before the child begins attending.

Financial support is available to assist with childcare fees*³. For details please enquire at the kindergarten.

* 3 This refers to the basic monthly fee. Depending on the kindergarten you may also have to pay for lunches, educational materials, childcare before and after the educational program, etc.

Nursery schools are child welfare facilities that take care of children during the day when their guardians cannot because, for example, both parents work. Here we will refer to them as **nursery schools etc.** (⇒see pg.3, 1 (1)) Different facilities take children at different ages. The hours they will take care of a child depend on the needs of the family.

To enroll your child in nursery school, apply at your local ward office. The ward office, etc. will determine your eligibility to use one of these facilities.

Childcare fees are free for children age 3 and up; for those under 3 years of age the fees are determined by how much the family pays in taxes.

Kawasaki City receives many applications for nursery school, and many people have to be turned away. Many documents are required for one's application for nursery school, and if they aren't all included in good order the application will not be accepted. The first step is to go to your ward office, etc. and get a thorough explanation of the process.

Certified centers for early childhood education and care*⁴ are a new type of facility which provides both education and childcare. Application and enrollment procedures, fees etc. are different between the kindergarten part (see pg.6, 1 (3)) and the nursery school part, but children in the nursery school part who are 3 years old and up can participate in education just as the children in the kindergarten part can.

* 4 Some of these centers are "unified kindergarten-daycare types" which combine the characteristics of kindergartens and nursery schools in one facility, while others are "kindergarten-types" which are basically kindergartens which also provide childcare to children who need it.

In addition, there are childcare facilities to which one applies directly rather than through the ward office etc. There are **non-authorized nursery schools***⁵ (see p.5, 1 (2)) which concentrate on childcare, and **preschools** (facilities similar to kindergartens) which concentrate on education.

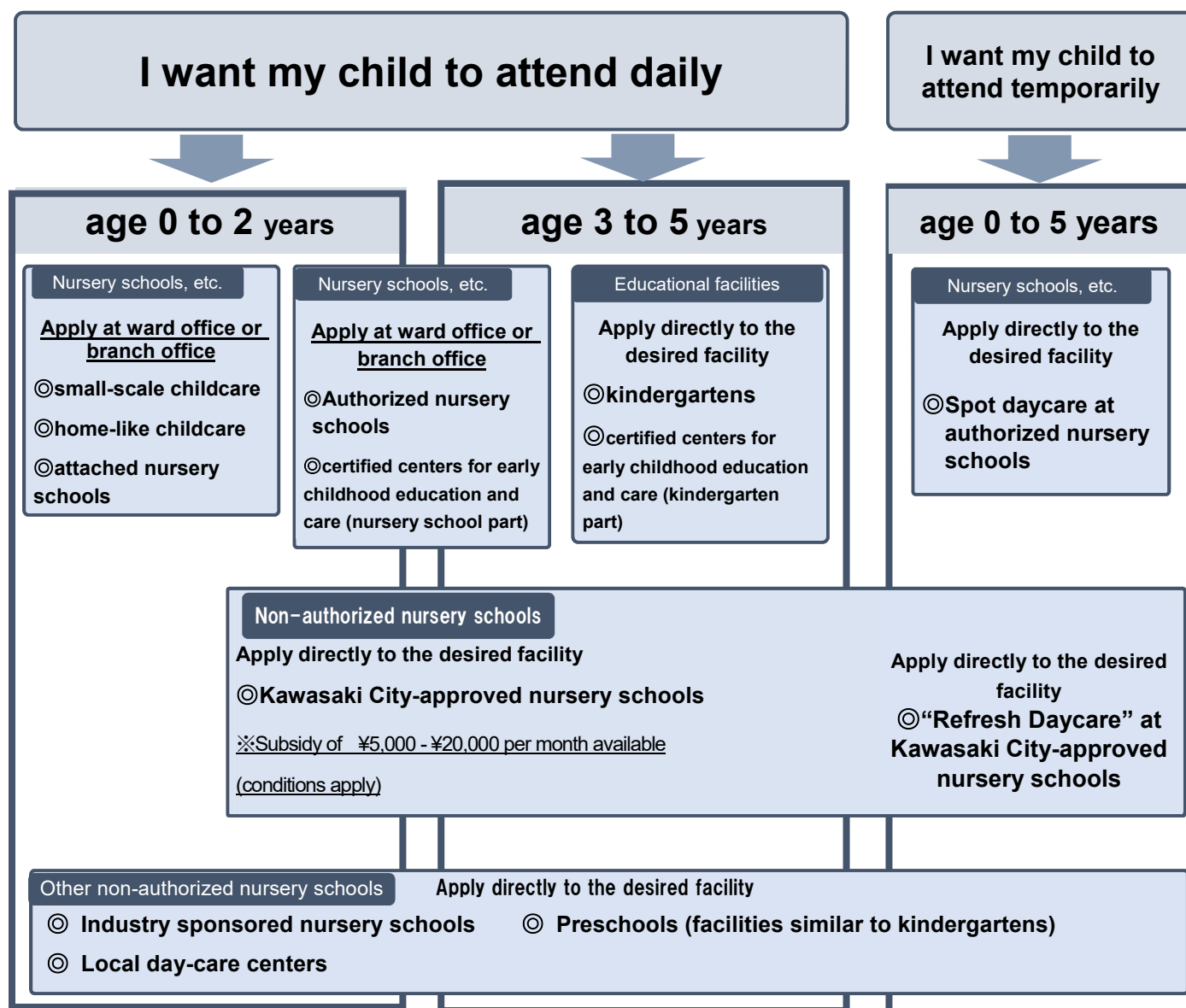
These are more expensive than nursery schools, but some financial support is available for the childcare fees of some of them (Kawasaki City-approved nursery schools)

* 5 Kawasaki City-approved nursery schools, industry-sponsored nursery schools, and local day-care centers

In addition, if you work just a few days a week and need childcare only for those days, or if you need childcare temporarily for reasons of illness or something you have to do, there is a system for **spot daycare** (see p.7, 2).

There are various choices available depending on why you need childcare, when and how long you need it, your family finances, etc. Please think about what sort of childcare facility will meet your family's needs.

Facilities and services separated by age, # of days of care/week, etc.



★Fees differ between facilities and services.

★If at all possible, visit the facility you are interested in with your child and speak to people there before applying.

★If you are considering using childcare, please visit your ward office as soon as possible and learn all about the process.

1 If you want your child to attend on a daily basis:

(1) Nursery schools, etc.

[Confirming your need for childcare]

Families may apply only if they have a need for childcare because, for example, both parents work 64 hours or more per month.

Even if the parents are not working yet, if they are looking for work the family may apply on that basis. In this case the parents must be working at least 64 hours a month within 2 months of the child enrolling in the childcare facility.

	Reason for needing childcare	Period of childcare available
1	Working 64 hours or more per month	period childcare is needed before child enters elementary school
2	Pregnancy/childbirth	about 2 months before and after date baby is due
3	Illness, injury, or physical or mental handicap of guardian	period childcare is needed before child enters elementary school
4	guardians caring for a close relative in home or hospital	period childcare is needed before child enters elementary school
5	recovering from disaster	until disaster recovery is expected to be complete
6	looking for work or preparing to start a new business	two months or less
7	attending university or vocational training school in order to help get a job	period parent(s) attend university or vocational training school
8	risk of abuse or domestic violence	period childcare is needed before child enters elementary school
9	the mayor has determined that a condition equivalent to one of the eight reasons above exists making childcare necessary from the point of view of the child's welfare because, for example, the guardians are considerably lacking in ability to raise their child,	period childcare is needed before child enters elementary school

◎ Days and times nursery schools operate:

- Monday through Saturday (closed Sundays, Holidays and Dec. 29 to Jan. 3)
- from 7:00 or 7:30am to 7:00 or 8:00pm
 - * Hours vary between facilities, so confirm before applying.
 - * Childcare after 6:00 or 6:30pm increases the monthly fee.
 - * Families are not authorized to use childcare the entire time the facility is open, but only during those days and times childcare is necessary for that family. Those looking for work may use childcare a maximum of 8 hours.

◎ Childcare fees (per month)

- Children age 0 – 2 years are charged ¥0 to ¥82,800 depending on what the family pays in taxes; children 3 years and older are free.

◎ How to apply

In Japan, both companies and schools begin the new year in April.

- Children normally enter daycare on April 1st (please confirm the exact schedule with the ward office etc.)
 - applications accepted until about November (preliminary application) → initial investigation (screening)
 - results of the initial screening are announced around the end of January

- from early February, secondary applications are due (the ward office, etc. conducts follow-up investigations)
↓ if the family is provisionally accepted
- in February and March, after a medical examination and an interview at the facility, final decisions on admission
(If you cannot attend these, you absolutely cannot get your child into a nursery school. You need to be in Japan during February and March.)

➤ for admission on or after May 1st

- Apply by the 10th of the month before you want to start sending your child to nursery school.
 - * If the 10th of the month is a Saturday, Sunday or holiday, then apply by the last day previous to the 10th that city offices are open.
 - * Applications are accepted at any time during the year, but if there is no space available your child will not be able to attend.
 - * If your child cannot get into nursery school from the month desired, they will be deferred. If a space opens up at the desired facility, your application will be reconsidered. If your application has not been withdrawn, it remains effective until March.

Advice for those applying to start in April ①

About applying

In Kawasaki City a lot of people apply to use nursery schools etc. and many applicants are unsuccessful. When you apply, under “desired facilities” write in as many places as possible within the limits of what is reasonable given your commute.

Applications are accepted at any time during the year, but almost all spaces are typically allocated by April, so in fact it is very difficult to get your child into nursery school mid-year.

Be sure to confirm this year’s deadline for the preliminary applications, and meet it.

Various forms and documents are needed for your application, so if at all possible visit your ward office, etc. by October to get a full explanation of the process, and complete your application in good time.

Advice for those applying to start in April ②

About choosing facilities

When considering a nursery school, be sure to confirm what age children it serves, what hours it takes care of children, etc.

It is not possible to drop off and pick up children at these facilities by car. Think about how long it will take to bring your child to and from the place, how you will handle rainy days, etc. when looking into a facility.

Before applying to a nursery school, visit the place with your child going to and from it the same way you will if you get in. Being able to check out the facility and its atmosphere, getting an explanation of how things work there, etc. will help ease any worries and aid in smoothly adapting to the place after your child starts going there

Please contact the facility before going for a visit. In September and October a lot of people go to look at these places, and you might not be able to reserve a time to do so. Reserve your time as soon as possible.

Advice for those applying to start in April ③

Consider what you will do if you are turned down

Consider ahead of time what you will do if you cannot get your child into a nursery school.

It is recommended that you look into using a non-authorized nursing school, a kindergarten, or another alternative while considering your child's age and the work situations of people in your household.

The application process and deadlines, fees etc. are different for these places than for the nursery schools, etc, so confirm these things with the places you are interested in. If you apply early, it's possible you will be able to reserve a place in one of these facilities. In some cases, however, you will not receive a refund if you cancel your contract, so make sure you understand all conditions.

(2) Non-authorized nursery schools and preschools

- ◎ Days and hours of operation
- ◎ Fees
- ◎ Application process and deadlines
 - These differ between facilities, so confirm with the ones you want to apply to.
 - Some facilities are closed for long vacations, such as summer vacation.
 - With some facilities, it can be advantageous to apply early (but in some cases fees are not refunded if you cancel.)
- ◎ Merits etc.
 - Even if your need for childcare has not been officially confirmed you can still apply.
 - If your need for childcare *has* been officially confirmed, children aged 3 and up are eligible for a subsidy of up to ¥37,000. Children under age 3 can have their fees exempted from residence tax.
 - Some of these facilities emphasize education or sports.
 - Some facilities offer pick-up and drop-off services (for an additional fee.)

Advice for those applying to start in April ④

Kawasaki City-approved nursery schools

Kawasaki City-approved nursery schools are non-authorized nursery schools which have met criteria set by the City regarding facilities, qualifications of childcare workers, etc. They are partially subsidized, and at least once a year a specialist from the City visits them for an on-site inspection and issues guidance as necessary.

Families whose need for childcare has been officially confirmed may be eligible for assistance with the childcare fees (up to ¥20,000/month).

Advice for those applying to start in April ⑤

Ten points for finding a good childcare facility

Non-authorized nursery schools vary in the quality of their facilities, workers, care provided, etc. so the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare has set down 10 checkpoints for finding a good childcare facility.

**Ten points for finding a good childcare facility:
recommendations from the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare
(from the above Ministry's website)**

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| ① First gather information | ⑤ Check out the children at the facility | ⑨ When you start using the facility, check everything again |
| ② Visit facilities of interest | ⑥ Check out the workers at the facility | ⑩ Be forthright about any doubts or dissatisfactions you have |
| ③ Don't judge simply by appearances | ⑦ Check out the facility itself (equipment, layout, condition, etc.) | |
| ④ Actually enter the facility and look around | ⑧ Ask about the policies of the facility | |

(3) Kindergartens,

Certified centers for early childhood education and care (kindergarten part)

◎ Days and hours of operation

- Education-oriented time is Monday through Friday from @ 9am to @ 2pm.
- These institutions decide when to close for vacations, for example during summer or for winter or spring break.
 - * Days and hours can vary between facilities, so please confirm them directly.
 - * Some of these places offer daycare before and/or after the 'school' time, or during summer vacation etc.

◎ Monthly fees

- Fees vary between institutions. Support of up to ¥25,700 is available to assist with the monthly fees.
- Other fees may also be charged at the beginning, such as an enrollment fee or uniform fee. Additional fees may be charged separately by the month, such as for educational materials, lunch, or daycare outside of the education period.

◎ Application schedule

- About summertime school visits are received and explanatory sessions are held.
- Around the middle of October application forms are sent out.
- On or after November 1st applications are due, and entry procedures proceed.

- * For detailed schedules contact the facilities you are interested in directly.
- * Quite soon after your child's enrollment is confirmed the entry fee, etc. comes due.

◎ Merits etc.

- Each institution has its own ideas about education, and its characteristic policies.
 - * Some of them are run by religious groups.
- Many of them have school buses that pick up and drop off students.
- Some serve lunch (one to five times per week), while at others students bring their own lunch.
- Many of them require students to wear uniforms, carry matching bags, etc.
- At most of them there is an active parents' association.
- There are times when parents would participate in events held on weekdays.

Advice for those applying to start in April ⑥

Finding childcare that meets your family's needs

If you absolutely must get your child into a nursery school etc., you have the option to temporarily put your child into a non-authorized nursery school and go on the waiting list. You're not guaranteed to get into the place you were hoping for, but points will accrue on your application for the period you were working and utilizing a non-authorized nursery school, so it could be to your advantage.

If you wish to stay home and raise your child while they are a baby and then go back to work part-time when they get a little older, you could put them in kindergarten once they turn three years old. In some cases the parents can work 5-6 hours per day by using the kindergarten's childcare services before and/or after the school hours.

Think carefully about how you will work and what your educational aims for your child are, and apply for childcare that will meet your family's needs.

2 If you want to use childcare from time to time:

◎ **Spot daycare**

For parents or guardians who commute to work or school just a few times a week, or for reasons of illness or ceremonial occasions or the like are from time to time unable to take care of a child at home, there is a system of spot daycare at authorized nursery schools.

- Days and hours of operation
 - Monday through Friday from 8:30am to 5pm (some facilities have different days and/or times, so confirm this with the place you are considering using)
- Daily fees
 - children under 1 year old: ¥2,900/day; at least 1 but less than 3 years old: ¥2,500/day; 3 years old and up: ¥1,500/day
 - * Please confirm the details of any charges for things like lunches or snacks with the facility in question

➤ Application procedure

- Advance registration is required (apply directly to the facility.)
- * One child may be registered with only one facility.
- * In some cases too many people may try to register a child at a given facility, and you will not be able to do so.

Advice on using spot daycare at regular intervals ⑥

Facilities fill up quickly in April, so contact the one you want to use as soon as possible and make sure there's a place for your child.

At some Kawasaki City-approved nursery schools you can pay a monthly fee for "Refresh Daycare" which you can use 1 to 3 times a week.

Some kindergartens offer daycare service for their pupils before and after the school hours.

Information current at time of writing (2025)