

Four Steps to Selecting a High Quality Child Care Program

Step One: Interview Caregivers

Call First and Ask...

- Is there an opening for my child?
- What hours and days are you open?
- Where are you located?
- How much does care cost? Is financial assistance available?
- How many children are in your care?
- What age groups do you serve?
- Do you provide transportation?
- Do you provide meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks)?
- Do you have a license, accreditation, or other certification?
- When can I come to visit?

Visit Next and Look for....

- Responsive, nurturing, warm interactions between caregiver and children.
- Children who are happily involved in daily activities and comfortable with their caregiver.
- A clean, safe, and healthy indoor and outdoor environment, especially napping, eating and bathroom areas.
- A variety of toys and learning materials that your child will find interesting and which will contribute to their growth and development.
- Children getting individual attention.

Ask...

- Can I visit at any time?
- How do you handle discipline?
- What do you do if a child is sick?
- What would you do in case of an emergency?
- What training have you (and other staff/substitutes) had?
- Are all children and staff required to be immunized?
- May I see a copy of your license or other certification?
- Do you have a substitute or back-up caregiver?
- May I have a list of parents (current and former) who have used your care?
- Where do children nap? Do you know that babies should go to sleep on their backs?
- How do you communicate with parents?
- Is there a copy of your Parent Handbook that I could copy containing your program policies and procedures?

Step Two: Check References

Ask other parents....

- What type of discipline does the caregiver use?
- Did your child enjoy the child care experience?
- How did the caregiver communicate to you as a parent?
- Was the caregiver respectful of your values and culture?
- Would you recommend the caregiver without reservation?
- If your child is no longer with the caregiver, why did you leave?

Ask the local childcare resource and referral program or licensing office....

- What regulations should childcare providers meet in my area?
- Is there a record of complaints about the childcare provider I am considering and how do I find out about it?

Step Three: Make the Decision for Quality Care

From what you heard and saw, ask yourself....

- Which childcare should I choose so that my child will be happy and grow?
- Which caregiver can meet the special needs of my child?
- Are the caregiver's values compatible with my family's values?
- Is the childcare available and affordable according to my family's needs and resources?
- Do I feel good about my decision?

Step Four: Stay Involved

Ask yourself....

- How can I arrange my schedule so that I can - Talk to my caregiver every day? Talk to my child every day about how the day went? Visit and observe my child in care at different times of the day? Be involved in my child's activities?
- How can I work with my caregiver to resolve issues and concerns that may arise?
- How do I keep informed about my child's growth and development while in care?
- How can I promote good working conditions for my child care provider?
- How can I network with other parents?

Notes / Questions:



Adapted from The Department of Health and Human Services, Child Care Bureau

