

# Four Steps to Selecting a Child Care Provider

## STEP 1-Interview Caregiver

Call and Ask

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

*Next* --Visit the center or provider's home

### a. 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 toileting areas.
- A variety of toys and learning materials, such as books, puzzles, blocks, and climbing equipment, that your child will find interesting and which will contribute to their growth and development.
- Children getting individual attention.

### b. 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?

**STEP 2-Check Providers References. Don't be afraid to ask questions on their experience or to see their credential.**

## STEP 3-Make the decision for Quality Care

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

- Which child care should I choose so that my child will be happy and grow?
- Which caregiver can meet the needs of my child?
- Does my child appear comfortable around the provider?
- Is the child care available and affordable according to my family's needs and resources?

## STEP 4-Stay Involved

- Continue to visit the caregiver location
- Ask questions when you are unsure or interested on how something works and why.

Remember, this is your pride and joy. They need to be safe and feel comfortable.

These steps are only the beginning. Gather as much information as possible to help you find the best care for your child. To find the Child Care Resource and Referral Program nearest you, call [Child Care Aware: \(800\) 424-2246](tel:8004242246). For more complete guidelines on health and safety in child care, call the [National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care: \(800\) 598-KIDS \(5437\)](tel:8005985437).

## **Evaluating a Child Care Provider**

### **CHECKLIST**

The following points are good ways to measure the quality of a child care home or center.

## **CAREGIVERS/TEACHERS**

Do the caregivers/teachers seem to really like children?

Do the caregivers/teachers get down on each child's level to speak to the child?

Are children greeted when they arrive?

Are children's needs quickly met even when things get busy?

Are the caregivers/teachers trained in CPR, first aid, and early childhood education?

Are the caregivers/teachers involved in continuing education programs?

Does the program keep up with children's changing interests?

Will the caregivers/teachers always be ready to answer your questions?

Will the caregivers/teachers tell you what your child is doing every day?

Are parents' ideas welcomed? Are there ways for you to get involved?

Do the caregivers/teachers and children enjoy being together?

Is there enough staff to serve the children? (Ask local experts about the best staff/child ratios for different age groups.)

Are caregivers/teachers trained and experienced?

Have they participated in early childhood development classes?

## **SETTING**

Is the atmosphere bright and pleasant?

Is there a fenced-in outdoor play area with a variety of safe equipment? Can the caregivers/teachers see the entire playground at all times?

Are there different areas for resting, quiet play and active play? Is there enough space for the children in all of these areas?

## **ACTIVITIES**

Is there a daily balance of play time, story time, activity time and nap time?

Are the activities right for each age group?

Are there enough toys and learning materials for the number of children?

Are toys clean, safe and within reach of the children?

