

Choosing Child Care

Choosing child care is a big decision. You want to make the right choice, so your child will be happy and safe. A good day care center or nursery school will be clean and cheerful. It will have friendly, caring, and patient child care workers. Whether you choose a babysitter in the home, a day care center, or a nursery school depends upon your needs. Here are some questions you may want to ask.

General Information

- Hours that fit your schedule?
- Close to work?
- Close to home?
- Can you afford it?
- Safety plan in place (e.g. fire escape plans)?
- Are all the children immunized?
- What is the sick child policy?
- Infection control practices (e.g. hand washing between diaper changes)?

The Babysitter or Child Care Worker(s)

- Friendly, caring, patient?
- Spends time talking to the kids?
- Seems to like kids?
- Healthy?
- Gives references?
- Is licensed?
- Knows first aid and CPR?
- Good training and experience?
- For each staff person, no more than 3-4 infants or 6-8 preschool children
- Has her own transportation?
- If sitter transports children, has age/weight appropriate car seats and seat belts?

The Building

- Clean and child-proof?
- Safe play area (fenced yard)?
- Enough space for naps?
- Good location?
- "No Smoking" policy?
- Passed lead inspection?

The Program

- Warm and supportive?
- Individual attention for each child?
- Do kids look happy and well cared for?
- Same discipline that you use?
- Healthy, nutritious snacks and meals?
- Same child worker for child each day?
- What are the rules?
- Regular schedule?
- Policy about visiting/dropping in to observe?
- Is the television rarely on?
- Behavior program in place (spanking not allowed)?
- Good games, toys, songs, books, and activities for each age?
- Praise and encouragement rather than criticism and punishment?

Different children need different programs. If your child is quiet and shy, he may do better in a small program where he will get more attention. If your child is very active, he will probably do better in a program with more structure. Visit the program to see if your child will fit in. After your child is enrolled, visit often to see how he is doing. Make some of these visits unannounced.