

A Guide to Selection of Child Care

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When selecting a child care setting, the main considerations other than your own preferences are availability, affordability and quality. This list can be used when visiting potential child care providers. These questions cover a range of program, curriculum, facility and personnel issues, and may be helpful in selecting an appropriate provider for your child.

Do the parents and/or the children feel the situation is a safe and comfortable place to be?

- Is there ample space?
- Are there caring providers?
- Is there support with separation of children and parents?
- Is care consistent, or is there a great deal of teacher turnover?
- Does there appear to be a relaxed way to deal with feelings?
- Is the environment clean and odor free?
- Are health practices encouraged such as hand washing and teeth brushing?
- Are enough adults present for each age group?

Are the children encouraged to feel good about themselves?

- Are activities suitable for ages?
- Is independence encouraged?
- Are children allowed to make choices?
- Are positive guidance techniques used?
- Are reasonable limits set with consistent reinforcement?
- Are the caregivers who are supervising play being too intrusive?
- Are gender-sensitive and ethnically sensitive terms used?

Are the children involved in meaningful activities?

- Do activities support children's natural curiosity?
- Are children allowed to explore?
- Is there flexibility in the schedule?
- Do caregivers attempt to build on language?
- Are open-ended questions posed to foster thinking and reasoning?
- Is problem solving and personal expression allowed?
- Is there a variety and range of play materials?
- Is a schedule of daily activities posted and followed?
- Is there a mix of activities and an appropriate use of materials?
- Is adequate time allowed for activities based on each child's individual pace?

Are child-centered activities provided for?

- Are shelves on the child's level?
- Is there child-sized furniture?
- Are furnishings in good repair?
- Are rooms tidy and organized?
- Is art work displayed at the child's eye level?
- Is there a balance of visual images that are non-stereotypical?

Are the children developing the ability to interact comfortably with others?

- Is there assistance for children in finding positive solutions to conflicts?
- Is there support through adult interaction and communication?
- Are there chances for the child to feel important?
- Are there options for group and individual activities?
- Does the caregiver talk **at**, children and infants, offering reasonable explanations?

Is physical development supported through appropriate health, nutrition and physical activities?

- What are the safety practices?
- Are there regularly scheduled nutritious meals and snacks?
- Are activities planned that encourage physical activity?
- Does there appear to be balance between active and quiet play?
- Is meal time pleasant?
- Is there a relaxed setting for napping and adequate equipment (cots) for resting?

Is there consistency between home and care to benefit the child?

- Do important people in children's lives cooperate and plan together?
- Is there an effort for daily parent-provider exchange of information to benefit the child?
- Are the providers genuinely concerned?
- Does the staff understand and ease transitions and separation felt by the child as well as the parent?
- Are parents encouraged to visit?
- Do staff and parents agree on child management practices?
- Are there trained staff willing to work as partners with parents?

Are children's needs met without allowing them to cry and fuss for long periods of time?

- What is the policy on sick child care?
- At what point of child dissatisfaction are the parents notified?
- Are infants readily attended for feeding, changing diapers, comforting?
- In centers, are there more caregivers per child in the infant setting (at least 1 to 4) than in other classrooms?
- Are toys and play areas sanitized daily?
- Is there a separate and smaller play area for infants in group care?
- Are children treated with respect at all times?

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