

Four Steps to Selecting a Child Care Provider

Step 1 - Interview Caregivers

Call first 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?
- 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, snacks)?
- Do you have a license, accreditation, or other certification?
- When can I come to visit?

Visit Next and look for:

(Visit more than once, stay as long as you can!)

- 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.

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?
- Are all children and staff required to be immunized?
- Do you have a substitute or back-up caregiver?
- Where do children nap?
- Do you know that babies should go to sleep on their backs?
- What training have you (and other staff/substitutes) had?
- May I see a copy of your license or other certification?
- May I have a list of parents (current and former) who have used your care?

2 - Check References

Ask other parents

- Was the caregiver reliable on a daily basis?
- How did the caregiver discipline your child?
- Did your child enjoy the child care experience?
- How did the caregiver respond 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 child care resource and referral program or licensing office

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

Step 3 - Make the Decision for Quality Care

From what you heard and saw, ask your self

- Which child care 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 child care available and affordable according to my family's needs and resources?
- Do I feel good about my decision?

Step 4 - 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?

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