

WARNING SIGNS OF POOR CHILD CARE

Even after you've selected good day care, continue to monitor and observe the care your child receives. The quality of a program can vary greatly over time due to staff turnover or other factors. Here are some danger signals to check on immediately.

- ⊗ 1. Parents are not allowed to drop in unannounced at all times of the day. You are required to call before coming to pick up your child at a different time or before visiting.
- ⊗ 2. Parents must drop off the child in the office and may not come into the caregiving areas.
- ⊗ 3. After several months, your child continues to be unhappy about going to the day care facility, or your child suddenly becomes unhappy after he/she seems to have adjusted. This may or may not be a danger signal since children often have problems with separation, but it should be attended to.
- ⊗ 4. Your child talks about being afraid of, or disliking a particular caregiver, or seems quiet and fearful in his/her presence.
- ⊗ 5. There is frequent staff turnover and you notice unfamiliar people caring for the children when you drop off and pick up your child.
- ⊗ 6. The care seems lax and indifferent. You see children being made to wait for long periods of time or left to play unattended indoors or outdoors.
- ⊗ 7. Your child has an excessive number of injuries that the caregiver cannot explain adequately.
- ⊗ 8. The caregiver's voice or manner seems harsh, rude, or indifferent toward any of the children.
- ⊗ 9. There are insufficient toys for the children to play with or few interesting activities to do. Toys may be put on display but not used regularly by the children.
- ⊗ 10. When you express any concerns, the caregiver becomes upset or defensive and cannot discuss the matter rationally with you.
- ⊗ 11. You feel uneasy about the care, lack confidence in the caregivers, or find yourself worrying about how your child is doing. A visit to spend time with your child and observe what his/her life in care is like should reassure you.

Thelma Harms, Ph.D., an authority on early childhood programs, is director of curriculum development at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Centre, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.