

Child Care Check List

Before you decide which childcare facility to enroll your child in, it is advisable to visit more than one centre or home facility. Here are some (but by no means all) of the questions you may wish to consider.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Is the facility warm, inviting, bright, clean, spacious, organized? Are the caregivers caring, concerned, happy, and knowledgeable? Are the Children active, happy, busy, healthy?

STAFF

How many staff members have training in early childhood education? How many staff has a valid certificate in first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) for children and infant CPR training, if applicable? Is the caregiver welcoming, calm, positive, enthusiastic? How do caregivers talk to parents? Do caregivers treat children with warmth, affection? Do caregivers talk to the children and encourage polite and respectful manners? Do caregivers encourage children to take part in activities? Do caregivers encourage children to try and to problem solve when they find it difficult to do something? Do caregivers listen to the children, let them express their feelings, and answer their questions? Does the staff: child ratio complies with childcare regulations?

DAILY ACTIVITIES

Are there routines for feeding the children, changing their diapers or taking children to the toilet, and putting the children down for naps? Are children who do not need naps allowed to play quietly during naptime? Are infants and toddlers allowed to nap according to their individual sleep patterns? Are children involved in setting up activities or

cleaning up afterwards when appropriate for their age?

Are there permanent activity areas used for:

- housekeeping
- building blocks
- books and stories
- art-easel(s) and table(s) - and access to the materials
- dramatic play (e.g., dress-up clothes)
- science (e.g., plants)
- water and sand tables
- puzzles and table toys
- music
- open area for movement indoors

Do the children have easy access to the activity areas? Are there a variety of toys and books? Are the play activities stimulating? Are the children's ages taken into account? Are there quiet areas where children can read or do a puzzle on their own? Are children encouraged to do some things by themselves that are appropriate for their age?

For example:

- getting a drink of water
- feeding themselves
- hanging up their clothes and putting away their boots
- putting away their toys
- putting on their socks and shoes
- zipping up their jackets

How much time do the Children spend playing indoors and outdoors? Are the needs of different ethnic and multicultural groups respected?

FACILITIES

Indoor

Is there enough space for children to play with others? To be alone? Are the toys, materials and equipment clean and safe?

Outdoor

Is the play area safe? Has the play area been designed with the space and equipment appropriate for the ages of the children? Does it have a fence around it? Does it have a variety of surfaces for the children to play on:

- sand
- grass
- a hard surface for riding bikes

Are there areas for quiet and active play? Is there enough equipment to accommodate all the children in a group at one time? Are there different play areas for children of different ages, or is the one play area used at different times (for example, for infants and toddlers, then for preschoolers).

HEALTH

Meals (if included)

Do meals and snacks follow Canada's Food Guide? Are menu plans posted? Do the meals served conform with the posted menus? What kind of foods are served? Are you satisfied with the selection? Are special arrangements made for children who have allergies or special diets? Is mealtime pleasant and relaxed? Do children have their own drinking glasses? Is mealtime pleasant and relaxed? Is the eating area clean and attractive? Is there a separate cook, or do staff have to take turns?

Hygiene

Are the washrooms clean and easy to use? For example, are the sinks at the children's level? Is there a safe, stable stool for the children to stand on to reach the sink? Are there separate areas to change diapers and

prepare food? Do children and caregivers wash their hands after a diaper change or going to the toilet and before preparing and eating food? Does every sink have soap and towels? Are hand-washing routines posted by every sink? Is there a sink with soap and towels close to the change table? Is the diaper-changing table sanitized after each diaper change? Is there a diaper-changing routine and log posted by the change table?

HEALTH ADMINISTRATION

What are the facility's policies for administering medications? Are medical records kept for each child? Are first aid kits available? What are the exclusion criteria when children are ill?

SAFETY

Are toys checked regularly to ensure safety? Are there safety straps or other safety devices on highchairs and change tables? Are the floors skid proof? Are poisonous or dangerous materials, such as cleaning products, kept away from the children? Is the kitchen area safe - for example, can the children reach electrical appliances or hazardous objects such as knives or plastic bags? Do children have access to the kitchen?

Does the facility have:

- fire extinguisher(s)
- smoke detector(s)
- covers on electrical outlets
- emergency phone numbers posted by each phone
- emergency evacuation procedure posted in each main area and practiced regularly
- emergency exits that are easy to access and not blocked

Are vehicles used for transportation of children equipped with seatbelts with their use enforced?

GENERAL INFORMATION

Is the facility licensed with the childcare licensing office? What time does it open and close? When is it closed for holidays? If it is a family day care home, when does the caregiver take holidays? What are the fees? How often do you pay (weekly, monthly)? Are there additional fees, for example:

- enrollment
- field trips
- picking up your child late

If your child is ill, absent or goes on vacation, do you continue to pay a daily fee? How much notice do you have to give if you want to take your child out of care for a vacation, planned hospital admission or to stop using the childcare program? Does the facility have liability insurance that covers the children when they are on the premises? When they are taken on field trips?

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

Are the children's arrival and departure times recorded each day? For example, parents sign their child in and out each day or there is a daily attendance sheet. Do staff and parents talk to each other at the beginning and/or at the end of each day? Are children

only allowed to leave with adults (such as grandparents) whose names parents have previously given to the staff?

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Can parents make unannounced visits to see their child whenever they want during the day? Are parents encouraged to stay with their child on short visits to the facility when the child is first enrolled? Are parents encouraged to take an active part in the centre? For example, are there parent/staff meetings and do parents sit on the centre's parent advisory committee or board of directors? Are parents invited to go along on field trips? Are staff willing to make an appointment with parents to discuss a child's progress or problems?

DISCIPLINE POLICIES

What is the staff's approach to discipline? How are behaviour problems handled by the caregiver(s)? Is there a consistent approach? Are children ever punished physically? These questions are meant as a beginning in the process of finding Child Care, which suits both the needs of children, parents and caregivers.

For information on childcare in the Victoria area call:

Victoria Child Care Resource and Referral

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(250) 382-7000