

Quality Checklist for Your Child Care Search

Research tells us that our children's healthy development depends on safe and positive experiences during early childhood. Here are some considerations:

Basic Information

The director/caregiver should be able to tell you:

- If the center or home is licensed by the State.
- Hours/days the center/home is open (no more than 12 hours/day).
- A list of daily activities for the children.
- The rates/fees and when they are due.
- Charges for holidays, sick days, and late pick-ups.
- How parent involvement is encouraged.
- If toilet training is required or they assist with potty training.
- Naps may or may not be given.
- If transportation is provided.
- Their early childhood education and experience.
- How many children each adult cares for (adult:child ratios).
- Cribs, high chairs, and toys are safe and in good condition.

What to Look for

Center/home setting

- An up-to-date license is posted where parents can see it.
- The center or home needs to be comfortable and inviting.
- The center or home needs to be clean and safe.
- A space for children to nap and for mildly ill children.

Social Climate

- The provider and parents need to keep rules and discipline the same for the child.
- Every child needs to play in a variety of activities. Conflict should be handled positively and appropriately.
- Children are encouraged to express feelings openly.
- The provider needs to be patient, warm and have a sense of humor.
- The children should appear relaxed and happy.
- The provider must be respectful of ethnic and cultural differences.

Learning and Playing

- Supplies and learning materials for the children's ages and abilities.
- The children are encouraged to be creative.
- There is balance of free play and guided learning.
- There should be a balance of active and quiet activities.
- Children are allowed to make decisions.
- Program activities are planned ahead of time.
- Parents and caregivers discuss children's progress.
- A consistent schedule is kept from day to day.
- The provider has a sense of pride in caring for children.

Health Nutrition, and Safety

- Health and illness policies are in place.
- The kitchen needs to be clean and safe.
- First aid gear and fire extinguishers are supplied.
- Emergency procedures must be practiced
- Diapering and toilet training routines are consistent.
- All staff must have CPR and first aid training.
- Safety equipment is in place: gates on stairs, caps on electrical outlets, and locked cabinet for medicine.
- All poisons and cleaning products must be kept away from children and locked up.

Warning Signals

- Parents are not allowed to visit the center or family home during the day.
- The provider seems physically abusive or rough with the children.
- The caregiver scolds, orders, and makes the children feel guilty instead of being nice to the children.
- Children seem to have unusual interest or knowledge of sexual matters.
- There is a high staff turnover rate.

