

Interviewing Your Child Care Choices

Early childhood shapes a person's lifelong capacity for learning, resilience, confidence, and independence. High quality child care choices involve many important family factors such as:

- **The age and personality of your child.** Some children are most comfortable in a small, home-like setting; others will do well in a larger more structured environment.
- **Your family's values.** The caregiver's beliefs about raising children should be similar to yours.
- **Your family's work and school schedule.** The program hours of operations must meet your needs.
- **The location of your home, workplace(s), and, if you have school-aged children, their school, in relation to the child care location.**
- **Transportation.** Who will take your child to and from child care, and/or to and from school?
- **What you can afford to pay.** The fees for child care vary greatly depending on the child care option you choose, experience of the provider, and location. Child care expenses can be a burden on a family's budget. Child Care Connection of Central Illinois staff can provide you with the current average cost of child care.
- **Your family may be eligible for financial assistance.** Child Care Connection of Central Illinois staff can provide details/ applications for the Illinois Child Care Assistance Program, Illinois Department of Children & Family Services vouchers for foster children, TANF (Temporary Assistance to Needy Families), flexible rate programs that offer scholarships, sliding fee scales, state & federal income tax credits (EIC Earned Income Credit or CTC -Child Tax Credit), and employer discounts or support.

The Telephone Interview

The purpose of the telephone interview is to gather basic information about the child care provider/teacher and the services provided. The phone call cannot determine the quality of child care that would be given. That should be assessed during the personal interview by the parent. Begin your interview by introducing yourself, giving your child's age and your scheduling needs. Inquire about vacancies. You may want to continue with some of these sample questions

- How do the children spend their day?
- What type of discipline do you use?
- Do you provide meals and snacks?
- Do you provide transportation?
- What is the provider/child ratio?
- How long have you been in business?
- What are your fees? What do they include? When are the fees due?

Schedule an appointment for the personal interview.

The Personal Interview

The personal interview will help you determine whether the quality of care is appropriate for your child's needs.

- Schedule a visit and plan to spend ample time observing the whole setting. Make sure the provider or other staff members will be available to spend time with you.
- Schedule a time when the children are present. Observe the group your child will be in.
- Bring your child with you, if possible.
- Ask to see the facility (both indoors and outdoors).
- Ask to meet the people who may have contact with your child.
- Ask for any written policies (admission and discharge policies, emergency procedures, payment policies, daily procedures, etc.).
- Ask for references, including at least one parent who has used the program.
- Use the checklist included on page 4 of this booklet when you visit to help determine which situation has met most of your needs.

