



ChildCareGroup

Steps for Choosing Quality Child Care

LOOK:

Visit several different child care homes or centers. Think about your first impression(s) and take notes. Always visit a home or center more than once and stay as long as possible to get a good feel for what the care will be like for your child. After starting care, continue to visit from time to time and talk with the owner if you have any concerns. If you are not welcome to visit at any time, you may want to find a different provider.

LISTEN:

What does the child care setting sound like? Are the children happy and involved? Do the caregivers'/teachers' voices sound cheerful and patient? If the facility is too quiet, it may mean there are not enough activities available. If it is too noisy, it may mean there is a lack of control.

COUNT:

Count the number of children and caregivers/teachers who care for them in each group. The fewer the number of children for each adult, the more attention your child will receive. Especially for babies and younger children, it is important to have a small child to staff ratio that meets or exceeds minimum standards.

ASK:

Quality care providers and teachers should be happy to answer your questions about their child care background and experience. It is important for you to know that the adults who will care for your children have the knowledge and skills necessary to provide the attention they will need. Also, ask about any special training they have and whether the program is accredited.

BE INFORMED:

Is your provider involved in efforts to improve the quality of child care in your community? How can you get involved? For information, contact ChildCareGroup Resource & Referral Program at 214-631-2273 or 800-441-7865.

Child Care Checklist

(Please print and copy this form to take with you to each child care facility you visit.)

Name of child care provider/facility _____

Address/Phone # _____

_____ Contact person _____

The following points are a good way to measure the quality of a family child care home or child development center. Place a √ in the box if yes and an X if no:

- **Caregivers/Teachers**

Does the caregiver seem to really like children?

Are children greeted when they arrive?

Does the caregiver get down on the child's level to speak to him/her?

- Are children's needs met quickly even when things get busy?
 - Is the caregiver trained in CPR and first aid?
 - Is the caregiver involved in continuing education programs?
 - Does the program keep up with children's changing interests?
 - Is the caregiver willing to answer your questions?
 - Does the caregiver communicate with parents about the child's "day"?
 - Are the parents' ideas welcomed and are there ways for you to get involved?
 - Do the caregiver and the children enjoy being together?
 - Is there enough staff to meet the needs of the children?
 - What kind of experience does the caregiver have? Does the caregiver participate in early childhood development classes?
- **Setting**
 - Is the atmosphere bright and pleasant?
 - Is the environment clean and well maintained?
 - Is the outdoor play area safe and offer a variety of equipment for different ages?
 - Can the caregiver see the entire playground at all times?
 - Are there areas for resting, quiet and active play with enough space for the children?
- **Activities**
 - Is there a daily balance of playtime, story time, activity time, and naptime?
 - Are activities appropriate for each age group?
 - Are there enough toys and learning materials for the number of children?
 - Are toys clean, safe, and within reach of the children?
- **In General**
 - Do you agree with the discipline practices?
 - Do you hear the sounds of happy children?
 - Are children comforted when needed?
 - Is the program licensed or registered?
 - Are surprise visits by parents encouraged?
 - Will your child be happy here?

If you have questions, please contact CCA about subsidized child care at 214-630-5949 or e-mail ccainfo@ccgroup.org; or contact Resource & Referral for information and referrals at 214-631-2273 or 800-441-7865 or e-mail rrinfo@ccgroup.org.

Adapted from source: Child Care Aware[®], a non-profit program of NACCRRRA, funded through a cooperative agreement with the Child Care Bureau, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.