

Give your Child Something That Will Last a Lifetime... Quality Child Care!

You want your child to succeed—in school and in life. You and your family are your child's first and best teacher, but the people who care for your child when you can't be there are important too.

Good child care is a first step to school success. Studies show that children who get quality child care enter school with better math, language, and social skills. These skills help your child do well in school.

When your child has safe, loving, and stimulating child care that you can count on, you don't have to worry while you are at work. You know that your child is getting the kind of care children need to be healthy, happy, and ready for school.

By choosing quality care, you give your child a great start on a love of learning for a lifetime of success.



Five Steps to Finding Good Child Care

1 Start Early

Start looking as far in advance as you can. No matter what type of care you are considering—a child care center or care in someone else's home—finding the right child care option can take some time.

2 Make a Call

Begin your search by calling your local experts—your child care resource and referral (CCR&R) center. CCR&Rs can give you the facts about child care, and a list of child care options in your area that may meet your needs.

Make sure to ask your CCR&R these things:

- * What are the licensing requirements in my area?
- * How can I get information about complaints and licensing violations?
- * Are there any child care financial assistance programs that my family qualifies for?



3 Visit and Ask Questions

Make sure you visit the child care options you are considering. Find out these key indicators of quality:

Adult to Child Ratio

Ask how many children there are for each adult. The fewer the children for each adult, the better for your child.

You want your child to get plenty of attention. The younger your child, the more important this is. Babies need an adult to child ratio of no more than 1:4 (one adult to four infants), while four-year-olds do well with a ratio of 1:10 (one adult for ten children).

Group Size

Find out how many children are in the group. The smaller the group, the better.

Imagine a group of 25 two-year-olds with five adults, compared to a group of 10 with two adults. Both groups have the same adult to child ratio. Which would be calmer and safer? Which would be more like a family?

Caregiver Qualifications

Ask about the caregiver's training and education. Caregivers with degrees and/or special training in working with children will be better able to help your child learn.

Are the caregivers involved in activities to improve their skills? Do they attend classes and workshops?

Turnover

Check how long the caregivers have been at the center or providing care in their homes. It's best if children stay with the same caregiver at least a year.

Caregivers who come and go make it hard on your child. Getting used to new caregivers takes time and energy that could be spent on learning new things.

Accreditation

Find out if the child care provider has been accredited by a national organization. Providers that are accredited have met voluntary standards for child care that are higher than most state licensing requirements.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) are the two largest organizations that accredit child care programs.

4 Make a Choice

Think about what you saw at each visit, and make the best choice for your child and family. Use the checklist (following) to help you.



5 Stay Involved

The work isn't over when you find good care for your child. You and your child's caregiver are partners now. Here are some ways to be involved:

- * Have parent-caregiver meetings regularly, and ask questions.
- * Offer to volunteer time when needed, like participating in clean up days or fixing broken toys.
- * Visit your child at child care and read a book aloud.
- * Join in special events and holidays, like field trips, Career Day, Black History Month, or Thanksgiving.

Even if you can't get time off from work during the day, you can still check in at drop-off and pick-up time. Ask the caregiver how things are going, and how your child is doing.

Visiting and participating in events at your child's provider send a strong message. It tells your child and your child's caregiver that you think what your child is doing and learning is important.

Check it Out

Ask these questions to evaluate your child care options:

- If you are considering a more formal child care program, is it nationally accredited, and is it state licensed or regulated?
- Does the caregiver welcome drop-in visits and parent ideas and involvement?
- Does the caregiver get on the children's eye level and give them lots of attention and encouragement?
- Are there planned activities for children to do as well as lots of time for free play?
- Are materials—such as books, blocks, toys, and art supplies—available to children all day long?
- Does the place look clean and safe, and is hand washing done often?
- Does the caregiver have written policies and procedures, including emergency plans?
- Does the caregiver have references?
- You know your child best—will your child be happy there?

