

Choosing Child Care Checklist

$\overline{}$	First impression The atmosphere of the Center is warm and positive.	Comments
H	The staff greets me while still providing care for the children.	
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H	The Center Philosophy matches my personal philosophy. The Center is accredited.	
Ш	The Center is accredited.	
	Where will my child be during the day? The classroom is appealing and comfortable.	
	What is the range of ages of the children in the classroom?	
	What is the capacity of the classroom?	
	The classroom seems large enough for that many children.	
	How many children will be cared for by each staff member?	
□	Who will be caring for my child? Who are the teachers in the classroom? Who is in charge?	
Ц	How long have these people worked in this Center? In this classroom?	
	What are the qualifications (training and experience) of the staff members?	
	What kind of on-going training does the staff receive?	
	How does the staff interact with the children? (warm and caring; on eye level with children)	
	How is child guidance/discipline handled?	
	What will my child be doing in the Center? Do the staff and children seem happy and relaxed?	
	Toys and equipment	
	Are there enough?	
	Are they in good repair?	
	Are they appealing and appropriate for my child's developmental level?	
	Are they located so that my child can reach them?	
	Is there a daily schedule including time for:	
	Indoor and outdoor activities	
	Quiet and active times	
	Small group, large group and individual activities	
	Free time	
	Will my child go on field trips? If so, how is transportation handled?	
	Will TV and computer games be used sparingly?	
	How is rest time handled?	

How will you keep my child safe? Do you have staff members on-site with First Aid and CPR certifications?	
Are emergency exits clearly marked?	
Are emergency procedures clearly defined and posted?	
Who conducts regular checks for hazards?	
Do you have monthly fire drills?	
Playground	
Is it properly fenced?	
Is it large enough?	
Is the equipment in good repair and appropriate for the ages of the children?	
Is there shade?	
Is there water to drink?	
How will you help me keep my child healthy? Are children and staff required to have a Health Assessment and up-to-date immunizations on file?	
Is there a policy to ensure that ill children are not in care or are separate from other children?	
Does the Center look and smell clean?	
Is food stored properly?	
Are there sinks, soap dispensers and paper towels in areas convenient to staff and children?	
Do staff and children wash their hands frequently?	
Are medications handled appropriately?	
Are diapers changed frequently?	
Is the diaper changing area near running water and away from food storage or preparations areas?	
How often and in what manner are toys and equipment cleaned and disinfected?	
How is toilet training handled?	
How will my child be fed? Do you provide meals and snacks or is that my responsibility?	
If I have to provide food, is there a refrigerator and microwave available?	
What times are meals and snacks provided?	
For Center-provided meals and snacks:	
Does the menu seem appealing and nutritious?	
How are allergies or special diets accommodated?	

How can I be involved in the program? Do you have an open-door policy?	
Are there any activities or programs in which I am required or invited to participate?	
Do you conduct regularly-scheduled parent-teacher conferences?	
How will your staff communicate with me on a daily basis? (verbal, bulletin boards, notes, etc)	
Do you have a Parent Advisory organization?	
Do you have a Parent Handbook? (read it carefully)	
Do you have references that I could contact?	
What are your payment policies? Do you have a standard contract for care? (read it carefully)	
What days and hours may my child receive care?	
What is my fee for care and when is it due?	
Which days are you closed (holidays, etc)?	
Will I be required to pay for days in which my child is absent?	
What happens if I am late picking up my child?	
How much notice must I give before leaving the program?	

After your visit:

Call the references

Check with your local Child Care Licensing Agency to see if there have been any valid complaints against the program and, if so, how they have been handled by Center management.

After visiting the Center and asking all of your questions, ask yourself how you feel about the program. Your instincts can tell you a lot. Plan another visit in which your child can join you and you can watch his or her reaction to the program, staff and other children.