

Choosing a Quality Child Care

The first steps in finding child care are to determine your needs and a list of potential providers. After that is done, you can begin to narrow down your choices by interviewing providers.

Consider more than one child care provider. Even if you like the first one you visit, it's useful to compare your impressions with others. The more time you spend on this important decision, the more likely you will be happy with your choice.

Give the provider your name, as well as the name, age, and sex of your child(ren), when care is needed, Where you got their name, and when you need to start.

Questions to ask the provider as you interview them by telephone

Do you have an opening?

What are your hours?

Are you licensed and by whom? If so, how long have you been licensed?

How many children is the facility licensed to serve? What are their ages and gender?

How many are full-time? How many are part time?

How many adults do they have at a time?

What are your vacation, holiday, and illness policies?

How many days did parents need to use alternative care this past year?

How much staff turnover has there been in the past year?

What are your fees? Hourly? Weekly? Overtime? If it is a center, are there sliding fees? Do you accept county Basic Sliding Fee Funding?

Are you a member of the food program (the federally funded Child Care Food Program- CCFP)?

What types of foods are served?

What training or experience do caregivers have?

Do you smoke?

Do you have pets?

Tell me about yourself. How did you decide to become a provider? What do you like most about being a provider? How long do you plan to be one? Does your family support your business?

What do you want to know about me (and/or my partner and child)?

Can you provide me with a list of references?

Can you describe what a typical day might be like for my child?

Does each child have individual blankets, pillows, drinking cups, hair brushes, toothbrushes?

Where will the child sleep?

Do you hold infants during feeding?

What is your policy on breast milk?

How much time do infants spend in the crib, play pen, walker, exersaucer and/or bouncy seat??

Describe how you would play with my infant.

Describe how you deal with parent/child separation.

What will I be expected to provide?

What type of diapers would you prefer? Can I use cloth? How often are diapers changed?

Describe how you discipline.

Describe how you would handle toilet training?

Describe organized activities you would provide for the children.

How do you handle emergencies?

Do you have infant and child first aid and CPR training? Do you carry liability insurance?

What is your procedure if child needs medications?

Are children ever transported in a vehicle while in your care? If so, do you have a valid drivers' license and what is your driving record?

Can parents "drop in" for a visit?

Are children allowed to attend other activities such as scouting?

Describe the feedback I will receive about my child at the end of the day.

What are some things you hope my child will learn here?

What would you do if you and I disagreed about something?

Even if you like the way a provider answered your questions over the phone, don't stop there.

Ask when you (and your partner) could meet with the provider to gather more information and to allow them to interview you. This will also give you a chance to observe the provider(s) in action and inspect the site. Here are a few more questions to ask:

Can you show me the equipment and toys you have? Check to see if the toys and equipment seem clean, well maintained and appropriate for the age of the children.

How do the children spend their day?

Do they get outside regularly?

Are older children supervised outside?

Can I see where the children nap?

What health precautions do you take?

Show me how you have child-proofed your home.

What are your house rules?

Can I see your contract?

Once you have found a provider you feel comfortable with, be sure to read our pamphlet, "Keeping Good Child Care"