

One of the most important decisions parents make is choosing a child care program. Enrolling your child in a quality program means your child is receiving care from a caring, trained child care provider in a safe, healthy, nurturing and stimulating learning environment. Your child's experience in child care will begin your child's foundation of learning that will last a lifetime!

This brochure will help you:

- select the best quality program for your child
- understand your child care options
- access financial assistance available to help pay for child care

Selecting Quality Programs

Childcare Resources promotes *quality* care and education of children by providing information, education and assistance to families, providers of child care and the community. *Childcare Resources does not license, endorse or recommend any provider. Only you can determine whether the quality of care is appropriate for your child.* When beginning your child care search:

- Call, go on-line or visit Childcare Resources for a customized listing of child care options.
- Start the process early as some programs may have waiting lists.
- Make appointments and visit several programs.
- Tour the entire center, including the outdoor play area.
- Use the Six Quality Indicators to compare programs.
- After the initial visit, make an unannounced drop-by visit before making a final decision.

6 Quality Indicators

Teacher to child ratio

How many children are attended by each caregiver? The fewer the number of children per caregiver the better attention your child will receive.

Group size

How many children will be in your child's group? Smaller groups tend to be calmer and safer environments – more like family settings.

Caregiver education and turnover

Ask about the caregivers' training and education. Do teachers attend classes and workshops? How long have the teachers been teaching in the program? Young children do better when they have a knowledgeable consistent caregiver for a least a year.

Health and Safety

Is the program licensed or exempt from licensure? Why or why not? What is the discipline policy? Is the environment clean and organized?

Family Involvement

Are parents welcome to participate and share ideas with the program? How will the teacher share information with you about your child's day?

Accreditation

Nationally accredited programs are measured by standards of quality that have been established by national child care organizations.

For more information about national accreditation visit:

National Association for the Education of Young Children www.naeyc.org

National Association of Child Care Professionals www.naccp.org

National Early Childhood Program Accreditation www.necpa.net

National Association for Family Child Care www.nafcc.org

National After School Association www.naaweb.org

Quality Indicators

Look, Listen, Count, Ask and Be Informed!

The following questions can be useful as you search for a quality child care provider for your child. Feel free to take notes and compare several programs before making a final decision.

Teacher to child ratio and group size

What is the teacher to child ratio for your child's age group?

What is the teacher to child ratio when children are napping?

If children are transported, what is the teacher to child ratio on the bus or van?

Caregiver qualifications

Are the caregivers trained and experienced in child development?

Is the caregiver certified in CPR and first aid?

How long has the caregiver been teaching in the program?

Does the caregiver welcome children of all abilities and backgrounds?

Does the caregiver seem to really enjoy children?

Are children greeted when they arrive?

Is the caregiver someone your child will enjoy?

Does the caregiver talk with and listen to the children and treat them with patience?

Health and Safety

Is the program licensed or exempt from licensure? Why or why not?

Are there plenty of age appropriate, safe and clean books, toys and materials?

Are children involved in a variety of activities with a balance of quiet and busy times?

Is the outside play area fenced and does it have safe equipment?

Can you visit your child at the program at any time, unannounced?

What is the discipline policy and do you agree with it?

Is the environment clean and orderly?

Are emergency plans and numbers clearly posted?

Is the program licensed or exempt from licensure?

Are children closely supervised at all times?

Family Involvement

Are parents encouraged to share ideas and get involved in the program?

How will you be informed about your child's day?

Are parent-teacher meetings held during the year?

Is the classroom schedule posted?

Is there a newsletter to inform you of upcoming events?

Accreditation

Is the program nationally accredited? Why or why not?

Is the accreditation credential posted?