

CHOOSING A DAYCARE: AN IMPORTANT DECISION

Are you planning to return to work? Decisions about child care are important and all parents have different expectations and needs when it comes to selecting a child care facility that is right for their family. Before entrusting the care of your little one to a child care provider, you need to determine what type of care is right for your child. Take a few minutes to review the following factors that will help you identify and choose quality care for your child.

We suggest that you plan a day where both you and your child can visit the facilities and observe first-hand activities for your child's age. Look for the following:



Staff

- ✓ Is the staff qualified and trained in First Aid?
- ✓ Are background police checks conducted on all employees?
- ✓ Were you warmly greeted by the staff upon arriving?
- ✓ Is the child-staff ratio respected?
- ✓ Are the children properly supervised and cared for?
- ✓ Is the staff interacting in a warm and friendly manner with the children?
- ✓ Do they treat the children with respect, flexibility and patience?
- ✓ Do they use positive discipline to build the children's self-esteem?

Physical Setting

- ✓ Is the equipment disinfected regularly?
- ✓ Are the play, rest and eating areas clean?
- ✓ Are the restrooms sanitized?
- ✓ Are children and staff encouraged to wash their hands before meals or after using the restroom?
- ✓ Are there separate cribs for infants and separate cots/mats for older children?

- ✓ Are the children supervised during naptime?
- ✓ Is the noise level acceptable for the level of activity in the room?
- ✓ Are there working smoke detectors?
- ✓ Do they have fire extinguishers that are easily accessible?
- ✓ Is there a sprinkler system?
- ✓ Are there covered electrical outlets?
- ✓ Are there fully stocked first aid kits?
- ✓ Are medication and toxic products all locked and stored out of the children's reach?
- ✓ Is there a written evacuation plan?

Meals and Snacks

- ✓ Are nutritionally sound meals and snacks served?
- ✓ Are there measures in place to ensure that all dietary allergies and/or restrictions are respected?
- ✓ Is the daily and weekly menu clearly displayed?



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Program

- ✓ Does the facility offer a stimulating and age-appropriate program that offers a variety of experiences that fully supports the children's development?
For example, the daily schedule should include opportunities for group and individual play, gross motor and fine motor activities, creative play, outdoor play, etc.
- ✓ Is the physical setting well-lit, welcoming, safe and organized?
- ✓ Is there a variety of age-appropriate toys, educational materials and equipment?
- ✓ Is the play equipment in good condition?
- ✓ Is there a safe outdoor area in which children can play every day?
- ✓ Are there separate play areas for younger/older children?

Policies and Procedures

- ✓ Is there a license or registration certificate on file?
- ✓ Are there policies in place regarding picking up or dropping off children?
- ✓ Is the front door locked at all times?
- ✓ Are visitors accompanied at all times when visiting the facilities?
- ✓ Is attendance recorded every day?
- ✓ Where are the bathrooms? Who is allowed to take the children?
- ✓ Does anyone have solitary access to the children?
- ✓ Are parents contacted when a child is absent?
- ✓ Are parents notified of all upcoming field trips or excursions outside of the centre?
- ✓ Does the childcare facility have an open-door policy, one which encourages parents to drop by unexpectedly during the day and spend time with their child?

Always Ask for References

Ask the Director of the child care facility for references; this shows that you are serious and concerned about your child's well-being when not in your care. If possible, contact the families directly and ask them about their own personal experiences. Keep in mind that licensing requirements provide a foundation upon which high-quality child care can be built. Although a license in itself is not a guarantee of high-quality care, it does ensure that some of the basic requirements for quality were being met when the licensing inspection was conducted. A high quality child care facility will exceed those standards and should satisfy your expectations.

Always Trust Your Instincts!

What is your gut feeling about the place? Do you see laughing, caring, sharing and generally happy children? Would you want to spend time there? Would you be happy in that particular setting? Keep in mind that your first instinct is usually the one to follow!

GOOD LUCK IN YOUR SEARCH!