

Guide for Choosing Child Care



Choosing good child care is one of the most important decisions you will ever make for your child. The time to begin looking for child care is well before you need it, *usually no later than your last trimester.*

You should visit several child care settings, either centers or family child care homes, before you decide which one is best for your family. Call ahead for an appointment, plan on staying at least an hour to watch activities, check the surroundings and ask questions.

Things to think about:

- Ask friends with small children about their child care providers: Would they recommend their providers? Are their providers taking new children?
- Plan for back-up child care. Most child care providers will not take sick children. Where will your child go if he/she is sick? Also, in-home providers may get sick or take a vacation, so you need other arrangements.
- Is the day care provider licensed? Call your local SRS office (in Newton: 283-3015) to get a list of licensed day care providers in your area. Then set up some visits.

Here are some questions to help you find a place where you feel comfortable leaving your child.

CAREGIVER EVALUATION

- Do the caregivers seem to really like children?
- Are children comforted when needed?
- Are there age-appropriate activities?
- Will the caregivers tell you what your child is doing every day?
- Will caregivers accept your presence at unexpected times to observe?
- What are the discipline practices?

RATIO OF ADULTS TO CHILDREN

How many adults take care of how many children? The goal is good levels of interaction between each child and an adult.

Over crowding is not good for development, even if standards are met. If you think it's too many, go with your gut.

SETTING

- Is the atmosphere bright and pleasant?
- What type of meals are served, and would you eat them?
- Is there enough space for your children in play and eating areas?
- Is the playground surrounded by a fence?
- Is play equipment in good condition and age appropriate?



- Are the activities right for each age group?
- Are there enough toys and learning materials for the number of children?
- Are the toys clean and in good condition?
- Are there appropriate toys for each age group?

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Do all caregivers and children wash their hands often, especially before eating and after using the bathroom or changing diapers?
- Is the place where diapers are changed clean?
- Are the kitchen and eating areas clean?
- What is the plan if a child is injured, sick or lost?
- Is there information about who to contact in an emergency?
- What is the plan if there is a tornado or fire?
- Are dangerous things out of reach of children?
- What kind of first aid is provided?
- Do caregivers employ infant back sleeping and safe sleep policies (no pillows, toys or soft bedding in cribs) to reduce risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome?
- Have all caregivers had background checks?



ACTIVITIES

- Is there a daily balance of play time, story time, and nap time with flexibility in the schedule?

Information provided courtesy of



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