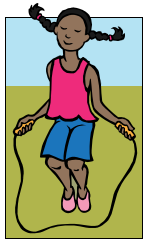


## Characteristics of Quality Child Care

Almost two-thirds of young children live in homes where both parents (or a single parent) work and therefore are in some form of child care. Some are in informal settings (with a relative or neighbor) and others are in formally licensed or regulated programs.

The child care choice is kind of like buying a car—just as you think about price, style, size and other options on a car, you'll want to consider some key information when choosing child care:



- Number of children
- Ages served
- Cost
- Location and hours
- Teachers' qualifications
- Employee turnover rate

### Visiting child care settings

It's a good idea to bring your child along. This will give you a chance to see how the caregivers interact with your child and how he/she responds.

Some positive signs are easy to see: a setting that is welcoming and clean, full participation by the children, teachers working with small groups, children's artwork on the walls, and healthy snacks on the table. The caregivers should get down on your child's level to talk with him/her. The children should sound happy.

You'll probably see disagreements among the children. Watch what happens. Well trained caregivers will talk to an upset child about how he/she feels and how the other child feels. They will try to encourage the children to come up with solutions.

The care setting you choose may be formal or informal. No matter which one, the person you choose to care for your child must be loving, responsive, trustworthy, and eager to foster the child's curiosity and creativity.



When the caregiver ...	Your child ...
Reads your child's cues and responds with love	Will form attachment and trust.
Provides a clean, safe, comfortable environment	Learns to explore, play and feel secure.
Offers many kinds of toys, books, sights, sounds and materials	Can experiment with new items and be stimulated to learn.
Schedules times for quiet activities and rest	Will avoid being overstimulated and have opportunities to play alone creatively.
Encourages your child's curiosity and creativity and praises his new skills	Grows in confidence and self-esteem.

# Child care Checklist

## Caregivers

- Y N Is the caregiver's personality warm and attentive?
- Y N Does the caregiver greet children when they arrive?
- Y N Is she in tune with the children's physical and emotional needs?
- Y N Are there enough caregivers? (Minimum of 1-to-4 ratio for babies under 2 yr and 1-to-10 for 3 yr+)
- Y N How long have staff been in this program or been providing care?
- Y N Do all staff members have training in first aid, CPR, and early childhood education?
- Y N Have all employees gone through background checks, and are the screenings on file?
- Y N Do you agree with the caregiver's policies on discipline, toilet training, aggression, accidents, play, and problem solving? Is there a written description of the program goals, policies and procedures?
- Y N Are the caregivers willing to tell you what your child did each day and communicate regularly with you?
- Y N Are the caregivers open to parent questions, ideas, involvement, and visits?

## Setting

- Y N Is it clean, comfortable, and safe (child proofed)?
- Y N Can staff prove their program complies with local health and safety regulations?
- Y N Can children reach toys and books without help?
- Y N Are there different areas for rest, quiet play, and active play?
- Y N Is there a fenced-in outdoor play area with a variety of safe equipment?
- Y N Can caregivers see all the children all the time?
- Y N Does the program require immunization records, emergency phone numbers and other numbers in case of emergencies on all children enrolled?
- Y N Are the children supervised all the time, even when they are asleep
- Y N Are there routines for diapering? Handwashing? Are the changing areas clean?



## Activities

- Y N Is the routine predictable, but flexible enough to meet your child's needs?
- Y N Does the daily schedule include play time, story time, activities, and rest?
- Y N Are the toys, materials and activities right for the children's ages?
- Y N Are there enough toys for the number of children there?
- Y N Are the goals and expectations appropriate for each age level? How is children's progress noted?
- Y N Is respect for each child shown and taught? Can caregivers explain how this is done?
- Y N How is discipline carried out? Is it positive, clear, consistent and fair? What happens if a child gets in trouble? If he/she bites or hits someone?
- Y N Are the meals and snacks nutritious?
- Y N Is independence encouraged in self-care (like washing hands) and routine activities (like eating snacks and cleaning up)?

## Other

- Y N Is it conveniently located?
- Y N Is there someone on staff who speaks your home language?
- Y N Are parents welcome to visit or help out in the class at any time?
- Y N Does the staff communicate respectfully with parents about issues related to the child?
- Y N Is there an overall atmosphere of warmth and caring?