

# CHOOSING QUALITY CHILD CARE

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## START EARLY

Start looking as far in advance as you can. No matter what type of care you are considering -- a child care center or care by a licensed family provider -- finding the right child care option can take some time.

## MAKE A CALL

Begin your search by calling your local experts - your child care resource and referral (CCR&R) center. CCR&Rs can give you the facts about child care, and a list of child care options in your area that may meet your needs. In addition to the information given here, make sure to ask your CCR&R these things:

- What are the licensing requirements in my area?
- How can I get information about complaints and licensing violations?
- Are there any child care financial assistance programs that my family qualifies for?

## VISIT AND ASK QUESTIONS

Visit the child care programs you are considering. Find out about these key indicators of quality:

- ✓ **Adult to Child Ratio:** Ask how many children are cared for by each adult. The fewer the children for each adult, the better for your child. You want your child to get plenty of attention. The younger your child, the more important this is. Babies need an adult to child ratio of no more than 1:4 (one adult for four infants); while four-year-olds can do well with a ratio of 1:10 (one adult for ten children).
- ✓ **Group Size:** Find out how many children are in the total group. The smaller the group, the better. Imagine a group of 25 two-year olds with five adults, compared to a group of 10 with two adults. Both groups have the same adult to child ratio. Which would be calmer and safer? Which would be more like a family?
- ✓ **Caregiver Qualifications:** Ask about the caregivers' training and education. Caregivers with degrees and/or special training in working with children will be better able to help your child learn. Also, are the caregivers involved in activities to improve their skills? Do they attend classes or workshops?
- ✓ **Turnover:** Check how long caregivers have been at the center or providing care in their homes. It's best if children stay with the same caregiver at least a year. Caregivers who come and go make it hard on your child. Getting used to new caregivers takes time and energy that could be spent on learning new things.
- ✓ **Accreditation:** Find out if the child care provider has been accredited by a national organization. Providers that are accredited have met voluntary standards for child care that are higher than most state licensing requirements. The National Association for

the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and The National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) are the two largest organizations that accredit child care programs.

- ✓ **Health & Safety:** Look around the spaces where your child will be spending time. Does the indoor play area seem clean and free of hazards like sharp edges or uncovered outlets? Is there a safe outdoor play area with equipment in good condition? Caregivers should also instruct children to wash their hands before meals and after toileting, sneezing, and coughing. The diaper changing area should not be near the food storage or preparation area

### **MAKE A CHOICE**

Think about what you saw at each visit, and make the best choice for your child and family.

### **STAY INVOLVED**

The work isn't over when you find good care for your child. You and your child's caregiver are partners now. Here are some ways to be involved:

- Have parent-caregiver meetings regularly, and ask questions.
- Offer to volunteer time when needed, such as participating in clean up days, or fixing broken toys.
- Be there on your child's birthday party.
- Visit your child at child care and read a book aloud.
- Join in special events, like field trips, Career Day, Black History Month, or on holidays.

Even if you can't get time off from work during the day, you can still check in at drop-off and pick-up times. Ask the caregiver how things are going, and how your child is doing.

Visiting and participating in events at your child's provider sends a strong message. It tells your child and your child's caregiver that you think what your child is doing and learning is important.

Find out more about efforts in your community to improve the quality of child care. Is your caregiver involved in these activities? How can you get involved? For more information, contact

Child Care Resource Center, Inc.  
130 Bishop Allen Drive, Cambridge, MA 02139  
Parent INFOline – 617-547-1063 x 504  
Fax: 617-547-3340  
Email: [parentinfo@ccrcinc.org](mailto:parentinfo@ccrcinc.org)  
Website: [www.cccrcinc.org](http://www.cccrcinc.org)