

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE CHILD CARE:

Questions for Parents of Infants

This checklist is meant to help you assess child care programs in their ability to provide your infant with an environment in which he or she can thrive. Be sure to get references from parents who have had a child your child's age in the program you are considering for a different point of view.

The three main developmental needs of infants are:

- The need to develop trust and a sense of security through attachment with adults;
- The need to explore the environment with all their senses, in a limited and safe way; and,
- The need to have physical needs taken care of in a clean, timely manner.

Questions for any type of infant provider or program:

1. Is the play space warm, soft, clean, and comfortable? Does it contain safe, interesting objects to touch, varying surfaces to explore, and bright and cheerful sights to watch? Are children allowed to explore freely in the play area?
2. Is the sleeping area quiet, comfortable, and apart from other activities?
3. Is the changing area away from the cooking/eating and play area? Is it clean?
4. Can the baby feel safe from distraction, over-stimulation, or confusion?
5. Will your child dictate his or her own schedule? Does the provider give the individual children flexibility based on their own changing, daily needs?
6. How quickly does the provider respond to a child in need? Are there any other responsibilities that may prevent the provider from getting to a child quickly? Does the provider respond to a crying child with warmth and affection?
7. Does the provider interact with the individual children during activities other than those related to physical needs? Are infants held and cuddled "just because"? Does the provider talk or sing to the infants with plenty of eye contact, using real words and a soothing tone of voice?
8. Are individual infants held while taking a bottle? If applicable for you, does the provider/center support nursing parents? Is an appropriate place for nursing provided?
9. How many other children are in the class/program with your child? How old are they?

10. Do infants with this provider get to explore areas outside their main room? Do they get to go outside regularly? Ask what a typical day is like for a child your own child's age in this program.
11. Who is responsible for providing formula? Baby food? What are the policies regarding foods and feeding? What are you responsible for providing - diapers, blankets, extra changes of clothes, a crib or car seat?

Especially for Family Child Care Programs . . .

1. Is the provider's caring style and philosophy similar to your own? Do you feel comfortable with the provider's style and methods?
2. Is the environment arranged to be safely navigated by infants? How much free play does the infant have in that environment? How much interaction is there among the other children? Where will the baby spend most of his or her time?
3. What are the other household demands on the provider's attention? Could they be an obstacle to providing a quick response to your child's needs?
4. What is this provider's experience with infants? Any special qualifications or educational experiences?
5. Will children be traveling by car with the provider? How often? Are you comfortable with this?
6. Are any other adults going to be in the house during child care hours? An assistant? A spouse? Older children?

Especially for Center-based Programs . . .

1. How many adults will be involved in the care of your baby? Will the same people be caring for your baby on the same schedule each day or week? What is the turnover rate for infant teachers?
2. What are the qualifications and experience of each person who will be caring for your infant? Do they have any special training?
3. How will you communicate with your child's teacher(s)? Is a written log kept and is it available to you on a daily basis?
4. What is this center's philosophy about infant development? Is it compatible with your parenting style?

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