

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE CHILD CARE:

Questions for Parents of Toddlers

This checklist is meant to help you assess child care programs in their ability to provide your toddler 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 four main developmental characteristics of toddlers are:

- Increased motor skills;
- A developing sense of independence and self-esteem. Toddlers will test the limits of their environment as they learn rules and behavioral control;
- An interest in other people, although social skills are limited; and,
- The beginnings of language as a means to communicate thoughts and feelings.

Questions for any type of toddler provider or program:

1. Is the play space child-safe and clean? Does it contain safe and interesting objects to touch and varying surfaces on which to crawl, climb and explore?
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? How is toilet training handled? Are children accommodated based on their individual readiness?
4. Is there plenty of opportunity for active physical play and free exploration? Are children's toys at their level, and are providers' materials safely out of reach? Is there opportunity for each child to play independently?
5. How much will your child dictate his or her own schedule? Does the provider give each child some flexibility based on his or her own daily needs?
6. What is the provider's/program's philosophy on discipline? How are safe limits set and do you feel comfortable with these methods?
7. Does the provider interact directly with each child individually, rather than just watching? Does the provider talk directly to the children, using real words and real sentences? Does he or she use plenty of eye contact and get down on their physical level?
8. Is each toddler given the freedom to watch activities or plunge into them depending upon his or her individual style?
9. Does the provider settle disputes calmly, redirecting the children's interest? Does he or she help head off problems before they start? Are these times treated as an opportunity to learn appropriate behavior or just a time to "keep the peace"?
10. Will your toddler get to go outside regularly? What is a typical day like for a child your own child's age in this program?
11. How many other children are in the class/program with your child? How old are they?

12. Who is responsible for providing food? What are the policies regarding toys or food being brought from home? What are you responsible for providing - diapers, blankets, extra changes of clothes, a car seat?

Especially for Family Child Care Programs . . .

1. Is the provider's caring style and philosophy, particularly in limit setting, similar to your own? Do you feel comfortable with her/his style and methods?
2. Is the environment arranged to be safely navigated by a toddler? Is everything child-proof? How much free play does the toddler have in that environment? Where will the toddler spend most of his or her time? Will the children be traveling in the car with the provider? How often?
3. What are the other household demands on the provider's attention? Could they be an obstacle to providing supervision and interaction with your child?
4. What is this provider's experience with toddlers? Any special qualifications or educational experiences?
5. Is television a part of this program? How much, when, and what programs are watched?
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 child? Will the same people be caring for your child on the same schedule each day/week? What is the turnover rate for toddler teachers?
2. 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? What are the qualifications and experience of each person who will be caring for your toddler? Do they have any special training?
3. Do children have space in their room to spread out and play alone? Are there a few of each kind of toy to help avoid sharing problems?
4. What is this center's philosophy about toddler development? Is it compatible with your parenting style?

Child Care Resource Center, Inc. ©
130 Bishop Allen Drive, Cambridge, MA 02139
Phone: 617-547-1063 ext. 72 / Fax: 617-547-3340
E-mail: parentinfo@ccrcinc.org
Web site: www.cccrcinc.org