

A DAY CARE CHECKLIST

How To Choose A Program

Choosing a day care program for your child can be a challenge. When selecting a program, visit at a time of day when the children should be active, such as in the morning. Take your child along and don't hesitate to ask questions. Take this checklist as a guide. Don't expect to find everything listed here! Do choose the program with which you feel most comfortable.

Look for:

A. Staff

- Treats children with respect, flexibility and patience.
- Is able to meet your child's developmental and emotional needs.
- Is of a sufficient number to meet the needs of children.
- Takes time to discuss your child with you.
- Practices good personal hygiene.
- Has previous experience or training in working with children.

B. Facility

- Safe indoor and outdoor areas and equipment.
- Orderly, clean play areas.
- Airy rooms with bright colors.
- Sanitary bathrooms and diaper changing areas.

C. Health and Safety

- Comfortable temperatures summer and winter.
- Rounded table corners and other furniture safety features.
- Non-toxic play materials.
- First-aid kit.
- Healthy snacks and/or meals.
- Clean kitchen area.
- Handwashing after toileting and before meals and snacks.
- Separate cribs for infants and separate cots/mats for others.
- Cleaning materials, medicines out of reach of children.

D. Program

- Proper child-staff ratios.
- Creative play.
- Plenty of play materials.
- Plenty of educational materials.
- Organized program of activities.
- Supervised rest time.
- Minimal, supervised TV if any.
- Stories read.

E. General

- ___ A license or registration certificate from the Pennsylvania Department(s) of Public Welfare and/or Education.
- ___ Rules clearly explained.
- ___ Good behavior encouraged.
- ___ Other parents visiting.
- ___ Children allowed to get dirty naturally through play.
- ___ No children "left out."
- ___ Lots of laughing, caring, sharing.
- ___ HAPPY CHILDREN.

Ask these questions:

- May I drop in anytime?
- May I participate in program planning?
- May I take part in special events and trips?
- What are the hours?
- What are the fees?
- What does this include?
- Is there a reduction in fee if my child is out sick?
- What happens if my child gets sick or injured at the center?
- Are the caregivers trained in child development?
- What are the hiring procedures?
- How long has most staff worked here?
- May I contact staff references?
- Is there a parents' group or program?
- Are there restrictions on who may pick up the child?

Ask yourself:

Is the center:

- conveniently located?
- affordable?

Do I feel:

- comfortable with the caregivers?
- good watching my child play at this center?
- that the center is "right" for my child and myself?

Try to:

- Set up a "trial day" when your child can join in activities while you observe.

After your child begins attending:

- Drop in unannounced and visit regularly.
- Leave emergency contact information with the caregiver.
- Set up two or three "back-up plans" in case of your child's or your illness.
- Get involved with your child's day care experience!

The Child Care Works toll-free helpline can help parents get additional child care information by calling:

1-877-4-PA KIDS

Compliments of

**State Senator
Wayne D. Fontana**