



What Questions Should I Ask?

Knowing what to ask when you call or visit a prospective child care program helps you make a wise choice.

The following list of questions may serve as a guide when you call or visit a child care program to see if it is the right place for your child

1. Consider your child's point of view. What kinds of people and activities make your child comfortable and happy? What questions might your child ask?
 - Who is going to care for me?
 - Are there plenty of toys I can reach and enjoy?
 - Where will I keep my "stuff"?
 - Is everyone having fun?
 - What will I do all day?

2. Look at the program's policies and expectations.
 - What are their hours?
 - What are the costs? Are there extra charges for certain services?
 - What is the policy about early drop-offs or late pick-ups?
 - Does the program have written policies, such as policies for payment, discipline, and attendance?
 - Are they open 52 weeks per year?
 - Are they open on holidays?
 - In a family child care home, does the owner close down for her/his personal vacation?

3. What do you observe when you visit the program?
 - Are the children happy and involved?
 - Is there a wide choice of toys and materials for the age of your child?
 - Do the activities allow children to think and play creatively?
 - Can children play alone and in groups?
 - Is a schedule posted? Does it include a mix of times for play, activities, stories, and rest?
 - Can parents visit at any time of the day?
 - If a family child care home is being considered, does the owner have a back-up plan in case of her/his personal or family emergency?
 - Are the group sizes small?
 - Does the program practice proper cleaning of toys and materials?
 - Are there healthy meals and snacks served?
 - Do caregivers and children wash and dry their hands before meals and after toileting?
 - What is the program's policy on care for ill children?

4. What are your impressions of the person(s) who will be caring for your child?
 - Does the teacher or family child care operator seem warm and friendly?
 - Is she or he calm and patient with the children?
 - Does she or he listen to the children?
 - Does she or he talk to the children and encourage them to express themselves?
 - Does the teacher or family child care operator have special training or credentials?
 - Does she or he have experience and references?

- Is she or he trained in child development and health and safety?
- In a child care center, is the Center Director/Owner trained in management?
- Does the teacher or family child care operator have CPR/First Aid certifications?
- Has she or he been screened for child abuse/neglect?

5. Consider the physical setting or environment. Is it the type of place where your child will be healthy, safe, and comfortable while you're away?

- Is a current license displayed? If Accredited, is the Accreditation certificate displayed?
- Are there enough adults for the number and ages of children?
- Are the exits unblocked and are there working fire extinguishers and smoke detectors?
- Are the rooms clean, well-lit, and cheerful?
- Are there enough materials and equipment for play? Are they clean, in good repair, and age-appropriate?
- Is there a first aid kit close by?
- Is an emergency evacuation plan posted and practiced?
- Is there an emergency plan for each child in case of accident or illness?
- Are there appropriate car seats or safety belts for each child if children are being transported?

6. Finally, ask yourself, is this the type of place I would be comfortable leaving my child?