

# Questions to Ask Child Care Programs

## Health and Safety:

1. In the event of an emergency, what plans are in place? How would I be reunified with my child?
2. What is the program's policy on administering medication?
3. Is the adult to child ratio appropriate for the number and ages of children in your care?
4. Are the children's hands washed before and/or after meal time, using the restroom, playing outside, messy play, etc.?
5. What is the program's sick child policy?
6. Are children ever taken off site? How and when would I be notified? How are children transported?
7. What meals and snacks are provided? Are they included in the fees?
8. Are meals provided for children with dietary restrictions or allergies?
9. Is there a special space to breastfeed?
10. Are infants always laid on their back to sleep? What other safe sleep policies do you have?
11. Has the child care educator been screened for child abuse and neglect?

## Activities and Experiences:

1. What is a typical day like?
2. How much time do children get to play outside?
3. How much screen time is typical each day?
4. How are toys, materials, and activities chosen and planned for?

## General:

1. Is there an opening at the time I will need it? Is there a waitlist for care in the future?
2. Does the program have written policies for discipline, payment, and attendance?
3. If split into classrooms, which group would my child be in?
4. Can I visit my child at any time?
5. Does the program provide daily reports?
6. Does the program have live video feeds or a security system?

## Education and Training:

1. Does the child care educator have special training or credentials?
2. What education and experience does the child care educator have?
3. What yearly training do child care educators receive?
4. Does the child care educator have CPR/First Aid certifications?

## Relationships and Interactions:

1. How do caregivers handle discipline or behavioral problems? For instance, how are biting, hitting, or bullying situations handled?
2. How do caregivers communicate with families?
3. How does the program show respect for the home values and culture of each family?
4. How are children comforted when upset?

# Things to Consider When Choosing Childcare

## Family Involvement

Child care programs should work with families to meet the needs of all children enrolled. Family involvement occurs when families participate in activities, attend meetings or special events at the child care setting, or exchange information about their child with caregivers. Some programs have an open-door policy, which means parents, grandparents, or guardians are free to visit at any time. Opportunities for family involvement can be beneficial for a child's learning and development.

## Staff Education and Turnover

Education and ongoing training of the child care educators is important. Child care educators working in a licensed child care program in Missouri are required to earn 12 clock hours of training each year. Some choose to attend more training, and some have taken college courses or earned degrees.

Low staff turnover provides stability for children. This also can show that the program has a welcoming, supportive, and positive environment.



## Group Size

Group size can affect how children interact and perform in the classroom. Smaller group sizes can reduce feelings of being overwhelmed for children. Some children enjoy working in small groups or one-on-one, while others enjoy being around a large number of children. Consider your child's needs as you choose the program size that will best suite your family.

## Ratios

Younger children typically need more one-on-one care. When each adult is responsible for fewer children, your child can get more attention. Interactions with caring adults is important for your child's social and emotional development. The adult to child ratios set by the state are as follows:

- Birth to two years of age: 1 adult to every 4 children;
- Two year olds: 1 adult to every 8 children;
- Three to five year olds (not in school): 1 adult to every 10 children; and
- Five years of age and up (in school): 1 adult to every 16 children.

Special rules apply for mixed age groups.

## Accreditation

Accredited programs have gone through a process to show how they meet additional standards above licensing regulations. Accredited program will have a certificate available for your review.



## Health and Safety

Health and safety practices protect children from harm and illness. Those caring for children should wash hands, disinfect diaper changing stations, and clean toys regularly. Cleaning supplies and other poisonous materials should be stored properly and out of reach of children. Licensed and license-exempt programs must meet the state's health and safety standards.