

A Parents Check List - 4 Steps to Choosing Quality

If you need child care, you want the very best setting for your child. When choosing child care, you should visit more than one program. The following list will give you guidelines to help you make a good choice.

#1

Interview Caregiver



Call first and ask...

- What hours and days are you open?
- Where are you located?
- Is there an opening for my child?
- How much do you charge? When is payment due?
- How many children do you have in care?
- How much child care experience and education do you have?
- What is the ratio of adults to children?
- What ages do you serve?
- Must a child be toilet trained?

In a home setting...

- Are there others living in the home? Who and what ages are they?
- Who, besides the provider, may be caring for my child?
- Will my child be taken out of the home while in your care?
- Are there any pets or smoking in the home?

Visit and look for...

- Positive interactions between caregivers and children.

- Children getting lots of attention.
- Clean, safe, and healthy indoor and outdoor spaces.
- Safety features such as gates on stairs, caps on electrical outlets, and a locked cabinet for medicine, poisons and cleaning products.
- A variety of toys and learning materials, such as books, puzzles, blocks, and climbing equipment that your child will find interesting.

Ask the provider...

- Can I visit at any time?
- How do you handle discipline?
- What do you do if my child is sick?
- How do you handle an emergency?
- Do you have a back-up caregiver?
- Where do children take naps?
- Do caregivers have up-to-date CPR and First Aid training?
- Do caregivers attend training?
- May I see a copy of your license?
- Do you charge for holidays, absences due to vacations or illness, or late pickups?
- May I have a list of parents (current and former) who have used your care?

#2

Check References



Ask other parents...

- Was the caregiver reliable?
- Did your child enjoy child care?

#3

Choose Quality



Ask yourself, from what you have learned....

- Is there a balance of free play and routines?
- Can the caregiver meet the special needs of my child?
- Which caregiver should I choose so that my child will be happy and grow?
- Is the child care affordable?
- Do I feel good about my decision?

#4

Stay Involved



Plan to...

- Talk daily with my caregiver.
- Ask my child about how the day went.
- Visit my child in care.
- Discuss any problems with my caregiver as they arise.
- Meet with other parents.

Checklist developed jointly by the Michigan 4C Association and the State of Michigan.

Age Specific Quality Care Checklists



Infant/Toddler Child Care

- Is the caregiver warm and caring?
- Does the caregiver go quickly to the infant when he/she cries?
- Does the caregiver watch and listen to each child to learn what he/she is like as an individual?
- What training does the caregiver have in infant and toddler development?
- What experience does the caregiver have working with children?
- How often does the caregiver sit at the child's level to play with him/her?
- Does the caregiver talk to the child while feeding and diapering?
- Is the caregiver following state licensing rules for adult to child ratio?
- Does the caregiver supervise children at all times?
- In a center, is there one primary caregiver for each child?
- Does the sleeping equipment include a firm mattress, without bumper pads and stuffed animals?
- Is the home/center clean and attractive?
- Are toys clean, unbroken and have no small parts that might come off?
- Are there enough toys for all the children? Do the toys help children learn to reach, to grasp, to stack, to push and pull?
- Do caregivers feed infants on the child's schedule?



Preschool Age Child Care

- Is the caregiver friendly and interested in each child?
- Does the caregiver listen to children and respond with respect and kindness?
- What experience does the caregiver have working with children?
- Is the caregiver following state licensing rules for adult to child ratio?
- What training or education does the caregiver have in early childhood development?
- Are the adults engaged with the children when they are supervising them?
- Is the facility physically safe, clean and attractive?
- Does the caregiver guide children's behavior consistently, gently and firmly? Are there rules for behavior? Do all the children know what the rules are?
- Are there materials and time scheduled for children to engage in free play; such as pretend play, games, large and small motor activities, arts and crafts, etc?
- Do the adults help children learn to solve problems by themselves?
- Does the caregiver serve nutritious snacks and meals?
- Are children encouraged to brush their teeth, wash their hands and dress themselves as they are able?



School Age Child Care

- Does the caregiver listen to children and respond with respect and kindness?
- What training do the caregivers have in child development?
- What experience do the caregivers have working with children?
- Are the children taught non-violent ways to solve problems?
- Are the rules on conduct known and agreed upon by adults and children?
- Is the caregiver following state licensing rules for adult to child ratio?
- Are the following experiences available: arts and crafts, playground and gym, computers, books and homework time?
- Do the children have input on what activities are available? Can the children choose what they like to do?
- If this is a center, do younger kids have time and activities away from the older kids?
- Is this program housed in or near the child's school to accommodate transportation issues?
- Is this program available to the family before and after-school, during vacations and any other time school is not in session?
- What is the procedure for dropping off and picking up your child?

