

## Remember to think about the needs of your family and your child.

### Ask The Children:

- Do you like coming here?
- Are you able to choose what activities you want to do and with whom?
- Do you help plan activities?
- Do the children here get along well with each other?
- Do you feel safe here?

### Ask The Director:

- Are you aware of national quality standards?
- Do you have a list of family references I can contact?
- Is the program licensed?
- Is the program accredited?
- What is the program's mission and philosophy?
- May I have a copy of your policies?
- Does this include schedules and fees?
- Have all staff members been trained in CPR and first aid?
- How are families involved in the program?
- Do you have an orientation for new families?
- Do you offer any financial assistance?
- Do you serve children with special needs?
- How does the program support children's education and learning?

### Ask The Staff:

- What is your system for knowing where my child is at all times?
- What is your procedure for handling emergencies?
- How do you handle sick children?
- Are children able to get a drink or use the bathroom when needed?

For more information about Child Care Aware or for help in locating your local child care resource and referral agency, visit [www.ChildCareAware.org](http://www.ChildCareAware.org) or call: 1-800-424-2246

For more information on quality standards contact: National School-Age Care Alliance [www.nsaca.org](http://www.nsaca.org) or call 1-800-617-8242



[www.nsaca.org](http://www.nsaca.org)  
1-800-617-8242

The National School-Age Care Alliance (NSACA) is the national membership organization representing the entire array of public, private, and community-based providers of after-school programs. NSACA has over 8,000 members and thirty-five state affiliates. NSACA promotes national standards of quality school-age care for children and youth ages 5–14 and grants accreditation to programs meeting the standards. NSACA's mission is to build a profession that develops, supports and promotes quality school-age care.

Child Care Aware is a national initiative, conducted by the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA), committed to helping parents find the best information on locating quality child care and child care resources in their community. Child Care Aware, in partnership with local child care resource and referral agencies, builds consumer awareness and supports families in making choices for the care and education of their children.

## ChildCareAware™

America's most trusted child care resource.

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**1-800-424-2246**  
[www.ChildCareAware.org](http://www.ChildCareAware.org)

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# Selecting a Quality After-school Program for Your Child



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## Why is a quality after-school program important for my child?

- \* Children are likely to spend as many hours in their out-of-school-time program as in school.
- \* Quality programs help your child grow socially, emotionally, and physically.
- \* Quality care supports your child's learning and children in after-school programs tend to do better in school. They are also less likely to engage in criminal behavior.
- \* Quality after-school programs build links to the community and encourage service, enriching your entire community.
- \* Good staff-to-child ratios allow for individual attention and help children build strong relationships with caring adults.
- \* Children in quality after-school programs are less likely to smoke, drink alcohol, and use drugs.
- \* You will be more productive at work when you know your children are safe after school, during school vacations, and in the summer.



## How do I select a quality program for my child?

- \* Begin by reflecting on what you did after school and in the summer as a school-age child.
- \* Think about your child and the type of program that would best serve your child and family. Then look for programs that can meet the needs of your child.
- \* Start your search by asking friends, family members, and school personnel for recommendations.
- \* Contact your local resource and referral agency (1-800-424-2246). They can provide all kinds of useful information to help guide you in your search for quality programs.

- \* Look for programs in your area that are dedicated to continuous improvement and are working toward accreditation.
- \* Once you receive several referrals you may want to narrow your search by telephoning a number of programs and asking about availability, hours and fees. Ask if they are open on school vacation days and in the summer.
- \* After you have narrowed your list to a few options, make appointments to visit the programs and to interview the staff.

## During your visit, remember to look, listen and ask questions.

### Look at the staff and children.

- \* Are they happy to be at the program?
- \* Do the children seem engaged in their activities?
- \* Are staff involved with the children?
- \* Is the space safe and clean?
- \* Are snack menus healthy and plentiful?

### Listen to the sounds of the program.

- \* Do you hear laughter and lively conversation?
- \* Do you hear staff engaged in conversation with the children and youth?
- \* Ask questions of the staff and the children and youth. Ask about staff training and development. Are all staff trained in CPR and first aid?
- \* Is there ongoing training available to the staff?
- \* Is the program aware of national quality standards?
- \* Is there a parent board or council?
- \* Are children involved in planning program activities?

### Consider the information you have collected and discuss the options with your child.

- \* Your child deserves a rich learning environment after school.
- \* Child Care Aware is available to link you to local resources that can help you find a quality after-school program.

## What to look for, listen for and ask about on your visits

### Look and Listen:

- Does the program seem clean, safe and organized?
- Do children and youth appear to be happy in the program?
- Do staff seem to work well together?
- Are staff respectful of each other?
- Are the children busy with activities?
- Do the children help each other and cooperate?
- Do you hear happy sounds in the program?
- Are staff engaged in activities and conversation with the children and youth?
- Are there adequate materials and space for a variety of activities?
- Are there quiet, soft spaces for reading, quiet games and relaxing as well as space for active play?
- Do the materials and program space reflect diversity?
- Does the space reflect the work and interests of the children and youth in the program?
- Does the program provide a rich learning atmosphere that supports children's education?
- Is the playground area safe? Is it fenced in? Is there some kind of cushioning material under climbing equipment?
- Does the bathroom look and smell clean?
- Are there adequate supplies?
- Are all hazardous materials kept out of reach of children and youth?
- Do food preparation areas look and smell clean?



Tear off this sheet and take it with you as you look for a program for your child. Ask questions and feel free to take notes about what you see and hear.