

**Give Your Child
Something That
Will Last a Lifetime ...**



**...Quality
Child Care**



America's most trusted child care resource.

1-800-424-2246

ChildCareAware.org



You want your child to succeed—in school and in life.

You and your family are your child's first and best teachers, but the people who care for your child when you cannot be there are important, too.

When you are at work, you want your child to be in child care that is safe, loving and stimulating. You want to know that your child is getting the kind of care that all children need to be healthy, happy and ready for school.

Quality child care is an important step to school success. Studies show that children in high-quality child care programs enter school with better math, language and social skills. These skills help your child do well in school.

To find quality child care, follow these five steps to success . . .

FIVE STEPS to FINDING Child Care

1. Start Early

Start looking as far in advance as you can. No matter what type of care you are considering—a child care center, care in someone’s home, or care for an infant, toddler, preschooler or school age child—finding the right child care option can take some time.

2. Make a Call

Begin your search by calling your local experts—your Child Care Resource & Referral agency (CCR&R). CCR&Rs can give you the facts about child care and a list of child care options in your area that meet your needs.

Make sure to ask the referral specialist these questions:

- » What should I look for in **a quality child care center or family child care home?**
- » What are the **licensing requirements** in my area?
- » How can I get information about **complaints and licensing violations?**
- » Does my family qualify for any **financial assistance?**

3. Visit and Ask Questions

When you visit child care centers or family child care homes, consider these key indicators of quality:

Group Size

» Find out how many children are in the group.

The smaller the group, the better for your child.

Babies need a group size of no more than six to eight in a room. Four-year-olds should be in a group of no more than 16-20 children.

Adult to Child Ratio

» Ask how many children there are for each adult.

The fewer the children for each adult, the better for your child.

You want your child to get plenty of attention. The younger your child, the more important this is. Babies need an adult to child ratio of no more than one adult for three or four infants. Most 4-year-olds can do well with a ratio of one adult for 8-10 children.

Child Care Provider Qualifications

» Ask about the child care providers' training and education.

Child care providers with special training in working with children are better able to help your child learn.

- » Do the child care providers have training to work with children, such as a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential or an AA or BA degree in early childhood education or a related field?
- » Are the child care providers involved in ongoing professional activities to improve their skills related to caring for children?

- » Is there always someone present who has current CPR and first aid training?
- » Have the adults been trained on child abuse prevention and how to report suspected cases?
- » Have the adults who are present and caring for children received background checks that include fingerprints?

Turnover

- » **Check how long the child care providers have been at the center or providing care in their homes.**

It is best if children stay with the same child care provider for at least a year.

It is hard for children if their child care providers change frequently. Getting used to new child care providers takes time and energy that could be spent on learning new things.

Accreditation

- » **Find out if the child care provider has been accredited by a national organization.**

Accredited programs have met voluntary standards for child care that are higher than state licensing requirements.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) are two organizations that accredit child care programs.

Call 1-800-424-2246 to find the CCR&R agency in your area.

4. Make a Choice

Think about what you saw at each visit and make the best choice for your child and family. Use the checklist on the opposite side to help you.

5. Stay Involved

The work is not over when you find quality care for your child. You and your child care provider are partners now.

Here are some ways to be involved:

- » Meet regularly with your child care provider and ask questions.
- » Volunteer time when needed, like participating in clean-up days or fixing broken toys.
- » Visit your child and read a book aloud.
- » Join in special events and holidays, like field trips, Career Day, Black History Month or Thanksgiving.

Visiting and participating in events at your child's program sends a strong message. It tells your child and your child care provider that you think what your child is doing and learning is important.

Even if you cannot get time off from work during the day, you can still check in at drop-off and pick-up times. Ask your child care provider how things are going and how your child is doing.

Quality Child Care Lasts a Lifetime

By choosing quality care, you give your child a great start toward a love of learning for a lifetime of success.

Check It Out!

Ask these questions to evaluate your child care options:

- Does the person who will be caring for your child have special training in early childhood education, First Aid and CPR?

- How long has the child care provider been providing child care?

- If there is more than one child care provider in the setting, is the total number of children in the group still fairly small (group size)?

- Is one child care provider caring for just a few children (low adult to child ratio)?

- If you are considering a more formal child care program, is it state licensed or regulated? Is it nationally accredited?

- Have satisfactory criminal history background checks been conducted on each adult present?

- Has the program been inspected by the licensing agency within the last 12 months?

- Does the child care provider welcome drop-in visits and parent ideas and involvement?

- Does the child care provider get on the children's eye level to talk with them and give them lots of attention and encouragement?

- Are there planned activities for children to do as well as lots of time for free play?

- Are materials such as books, blocks, toys and art supplies available to children all day long?

- Does the place look clean and safe, and does everyone wash their hands often?

- Does the child care provider have written policies and procedures, including emergency plans?

- Does the child care provider have references?

- You know your child best—will your child be happy there?

For a more in-depth list of child care questions, download our booklet, *Is This the Right Place for My Child?: 38 Research-Based Indicators of Quality Child Care* at www.usa.childcareaware.org

Helpful Hint: You can copy and take this checklist with you on visits, or use the Evaluating Child Care Worksheet that has additional information and room for writing notes. This worksheet is available on the Child Care Aware® Web site, www.ChildCareAware.org or by calling 1-800-424-2246.

Child Care Aware® is committed to helping parents find the best information on locating quality child care and child care resources in their community. In partnership with Child Care Resource & Referral agencies (CCR&R), Child Care Aware® builds consumer awareness and supports families in making choices for the care and education of their children.



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For additional resources or help finding your local Child Care Resource & Referral agency (CCR&R), call:

1-800-424-2246

TTY Line: 1-866-278-9428

ChildCareAware.org

For local information contact:



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