

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.



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:



Office of Child Care



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Matching Your Infant's or Toddler's Style to the Right Child Care Setting



1-800-424-2246

ChildCareAware.org

This brochure offers some guidelines on how to use what you know about your infant or toddler—like personal style and activity level—to select a child care setting that's just right.

The questions below can help you develop a profile of your child and learn more about the type of care that might best meet your child's needs.

What is your child's *personal style*?

Pick the one that describes your child most of the time.

Adaptable

- » Flexible
- » Approaches new people/situations with ease
- » Good with transitions

Look for: Large group settings providing social interaction and new experiences

Cautious

- » Thoughtful
- » Approaches new people/situations cautiously
- » Has difficulty with transitions

Look for: Small group settings that are less overwhelming

Feisty

- » Passionate, feels things intensely
- » Has difficulty controlling strong feelings, wants and needs

Look for: Programs where each child has a primary caregiver—someone who knows and understands your child (Note: All children benefit from this, but especially children who are passionate and persistent)



Adapted from the following ZERO TO THREE publications:

- *Learning and Growing Together: Understanding and Supporting Your Child's Development* by Claire Lerner and Amy Laura Dombro (2000).
- *Caring for Infants & Toddlers in Groups: Developmentally Appropriate Practice* by J. Ronald Lally et al. (1995).



How does your child *react to the world*?

Big Reactors: Communicates feelings and does not hold back!

Look for: Caregivers who respect your child's emotions but help your child to express them in a more controlled way

Low Reactors: Fusses very little, plays quietly and sleeps a lot.

Look for: Caregivers who gently introduce new activities

How *active* is your child?

High Activity: Is always on the go.

Look for: Individual schedules, safe exploration and physical play

Low Activity: Sits quietly, explores through eyes and ears.

Look for: Caregivers who engage children in sensory-rich activities

Is your child *tolerant of changes and challenges*?

High Tolerance:

- » Is not bothered by changes
- » Is adaptable
- » Copes well with frustration

Look for: Mixed-age settings that offer enjoyable challenges and stimulation

Low Tolerance:

- » Is sensitive to changes
- » Gets upset when daily routine is altered
- » Is easily frustrated, impatient

Look for: Same age settings with developmentally appropriate toys and activities



How *social* is your child?

Super Social:

- » Enjoys approaching new people
- » Is happiest interacting with others

Look for: Opportunities for group play

Take It Slow:

- » Is shy around strangers
- » Needs time to warm up

Look for: Programs that allow children to choose when they would like to play with others

What are your child's *unique needs*?

Sleep

Look for: child-friendly settings offering:

- » Individual schedules
- » Separate sleeping areas
- » Appropriate lighting (dim), temperature (comfortable) and noise level (low)

Cultural Identity

- » Are staff interested in your family's culture?
- » Do staff speak your home language or find effective ways to communicate with you about your child?
- » Are staff open to including books and other aspects of your child's culture?
- » Are staff's values and practices consistent with your family's?

Special Needs

- » Are staff enthusiastic about working with your child?
- » Do staff understand the medical and therapeutic procedures and assistive technology necessary to support your child?
- » Are staff trained and supported to work with children with special needs?
- » Is the setting accessible to your child?
- » Do any books/toys feature children with special needs?
- » Are staff willing to help your child develop the skills that match what your family believes are important?

Health and Safety Issues to Consider

Quality child care providers make health and safety issues a top priority. Use the questions below as general guidelines, and contact Child Care Aware® for more information (1-800-424-2246).

- Are diapering, sleeping, food preparation and play areas separate?
- Are there clearly written sanitation procedures specific to each area? Are instructions posted about proper diapering and food storage/preparation procedures?
- Do staff receive training on health and safety issues?
- Are infant and toddler toys washed and disinfected regularly?
- Is there a policy for sick children?
- Do adults regularly conduct safety checks of all areas inside and out for potential safety hazards?
- Do staff maintain children's personal grooming standards (for example, hand-washing)?
- Are all infants put to sleep on their backs?
- Is the staff equipped with appropriate first aid materials? Do staff members know basic first aid techniques (for example, CPR)?
- Do staff practice fire drills and evacuation procedures? Is there a written policy in place for evacuation procedures?
- Has a satisfactory criminal history background check been conducted on each adult present?
- Has the program been inspected by the licensing agency within the last 12 months?



Responsive Child Care Issues to Consider

Among the items we have discussed, there is one common thread: the need for caregiving staff to adapt *their* approach to meet your child's needs. This is called **responsive care**. To be responsive, caregivers need to be excellent observers of the children in their care and search for the meaning behind children's gestures, gurgles, cries and glances. Responsive caregivers wonder *why* a particular behavior is occurring, come up with an educated guess, and interact with the child to see if their guess is correct. Is a crying baby tired? Hungry? Wet? Lonely? Frustrated?

Responsive caregivers adapt their responses based on the reason behind the behavior as well as *the style of the individual child*. This ensures that all children are treated as unique, with their own thoughts, feelings, preferences and needs.

- Are infants and toddlers allowed to function on individual schedules?
- Do parents receive daily written reports about their children's day (and formal progress reports twice a year)?
- Are parents free to visit at any time during the day?
- Does the caregiver adhere to state-regulated adult to child ratios and group size?
- Is the caregiver turnover rate under 20 percent? Why do caregivers leave?
- When caregivers leave, how do staff help children understand the transition?
- Do staff receive medical benefits, vacation leave and continuing education support?
- How do caregivers respond to child-initiated interests?
- How can parents get involved in the program?
- If you are nursing, is the caregiver responsive and accommodating?