

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:

- Does the program have references?
- Is the program licensed?
- Does the program follow quality standards for school-age care? Is the program accredited?
- Does the program have written policies and procedures, including emergency plans?
- Have all staff members been trained in CPR and first aid?
- Do the staff have specific training to work with school-age children?
- 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?
- Does the program welcome drop-in visits and parent ideas and involvement?
- Does the program offer any financial assistance?
- How does the program 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?

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 at 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.



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:



Child Care Aware®, a program of Child Care Aware® of America, is partly funded by the Office of Child Care (OCC), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

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#1812-0926 #105e

Selecting a Quality School-Age Program



1-800-424-2246

ChildCareAware.org



Why is a quality school-age program important for your child?

- ▶ Children are likely to spend as many hours in their out-of-school-time program as in school.
- ▶ Quality school-age programs help your child grow socially, emotionally and physically.
- ▶ Quality school-age programs support your child's learning. Children in quality school-age programs tend to do better in school.
- ▶ Low adult child ratios allow individual attention and help children build strong relationships with caring adults.
- ▶ Children who have attended quality school-age programs are less likely to engage in criminal behavior.
- ▶ Children in quality school-age programs are less likely to smoke, drink alcohol and use drugs.
- ▶ Quality school-age programs build links to the community and encourage community service.
- ▶ You can be more productive at work when you know your child is safe after school, during school breaks and during the summer vacation.

How do you select a quality program for your child?

- ▶ Think about the type of program that would best serve your child and family.
- ▶ Ask friends, family members and school personnel for recommendations.
- ▶ Contact your local Child Care Resource and Referral agency (CCR&R). An information specialist can give you facts about school-age child care and a list of school-age child care options in your area that meet your needs. Call 1-800-424-2246 to find the CCR&R in your area.
- ▶ Look for programs that are dedicated to continuous improvement and are working toward accreditation.
- ▶ Once you receive several referrals, narrow your search by calling 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 there activities for children of different ages?
- ▶ Are staff involved with the children?
- ▶ Are both the indoor and outdoor spaces safe and clean with adequate equipment?
- ▶ Do snack menus include foods that are healthy and nutritious?

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?

Make a choice.

- ▶ Tear off the checklist and take it with you as you look for a program for your child.
- ▶ Consider the information you have collected, and discuss the options with your child.

Your child deserves a rich learning environment after school.

Ask questions.

- ▶ Do the staff have training to work with school-age children?
- ▶ Are all staff trained in CPR and first aid?
- ▶ Is there ongoing training available to the staff?
- ▶ Is the program licensed? Is the program accredited by a national organization?
- ▶ Is transportation available from school or to other programs (athletics, dance, etc.)?
- ▶ Is the program open during school holidays or when schools close for emergencies?
- ▶ Is there a time for children to do homework?
- ▶ Does the program have a relationship with your child's school?
- ▶ Are children involved in planning program activities?
- ▶ Is there a parent board or council?

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 you hear happy sounds in the program?
- Are the children busy with activities?
- Do the children help each other and cooperate?
- Do staff seem to work well together? Are staff respectful of each other?
- 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 cushioning material under climbing equipment?
- Does the bathroom look and smell clean?
- Are all hazardous materials kept out of reach of children and youth?
- Is food nutritious? 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.

