



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:



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Essentials for Your Child Care Visit



When you are looking for quality child care, we encourage you to:

- ▶ Start early.
- ▶ Use local resources.
- ▶ Visit with prospective providers.
- ▶ Stay involved after your decision has been made.

You can learn many things about possible child care providers by visiting before you make any decisions. The questions you ask will help you learn about the child care setting, the staff who will be working with your child, and the experiences of other families. What you learn from these visits will help you make the child care choice that is best for your family.

When selecting your child care provider . . .

Schedule an interview. Take time to visit with potential family child care providers and/or center directors and teachers. You want to know more about who will be caring for your child.

Be sure to visit the child care program. It is a good idea to visit more than once.

- ▶ On your first visit, you want to talk one-on-one with the provider or center director and become familiar with the home or center. This visit should also include a tour.

Note: *In some instances, a provider may ask that you schedule your visits around nap time.*

- ▶ A second visit might include stopping by with your child. This may give you an idea of how your child will fit into a particular setting. This will also give your potential child care provider an opportunity to get to know your child prior to starting care.
- ▶ Finally, you may want to stop by for an unannounced visit. Your potential child care provider should offer an open door policy. In other words, you should be able to stop by and check in on your child at any time.

Note: *Drop-in visits will give you the chance to observe caregiver and child interactions.*

Ask about staff education and training. Ask how long the provider/director/teacher has been working in child care. Find out the provider's educational background and any special certifications she may have earned.



Learn about the training providers have had to go through to become a caregiver. Make note of:

- ▶ First aid/CPR training
- ▶ Child abuse prevention training
- ▶ Health and safety training
- ▶ Child development training
- ▶ Training on administering medications

Ask about staff participation in any continuing education or other ongoing training.

Ask about background checks. Make sure that background checks have been completed for all individuals/staff who will have contact with your child.

- ▶ In a center, be sure to ask about more than the director and teachers. Volunteers, cooks, nurses, drivers and maintenance workers are all examples of additional staff who should have a background check completed.
- ▶ In family child care homes, ask the provider about background checks for any other adults in the home. If there is a chance your child will be left alone with a family member or helper, you want to know that a successful background check has been conducted on that individual.
- ▶ Ask if the background checks include fingerprinting. A check that includes fingerprints can add more strength to the results of the search.

Background checks may give you peace of mind regarding the safety of your child while in child care. Guidelines for background checks vary from state to state. To learn more about the background check requirements in your area,

contact your local Child Care Resource and Referral agency (CCR&R).

Ask for references. Speak to families about their experiences with the provider.

Visit with families currently attending care. Ask:

- ▶ Why did you select this particular child care provider?
- ▶ What do you like best about the program?
- ▶ Are you comfortable with the director and staff?
- ▶ Do you think your child enjoys attending care here?
- ▶ Do you have any concerns about the care your child is receiving?

Speak with families no longer attending. Ask some of the same questions above, but also:

- ▶ Why did you leave the child care program?
- ▶ Was there anything about your experience that concerned you?
- ▶ Did your child ever seem uneasy about coming to child care?

Hearing about other people's experiences can give you a better picture of the child care provider you are considering. If there is something that you would really like to know about a provider, asking someone to share their experience may be the best way to find out.

Following the above steps may help you make a child care choice that best fits your family's needs and that keeps your mind at ease while you are not able to be with your child. For additional resources to assist you in your child care search, please visit our website at www.childcareaware.org.