

Child Care Checklist

We recommend that you make an on-site visit to any provider that you are considering. Use this checklist as a guide in the process.

Provider Name and Phone	Date visited
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√ here	What to look for	Notes
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BASICS

	Is the program licensed? Is the license posted?	
	Do the hours fit my need? Hours	
	Can I afford the fees? Weekly charge:	
	Does the location fit my needs?	
	Does the program (group size, education philosophy, and environment) meet my child's needs?	
	Do they provide an agreement or contract that covers financial obligations such as payment schedule, discounts, bad weather, and sick day policies?	

PHYSICAL SETTING

	Is the setting clean? (Check bathroom, kitchen, sleeping, and play areas)	
	Are there any sharp edges, uncovered outlets, open stairs or exposed harmful products?	
	Does the environment smell pleasant?	
	Is it well ventilated?	
	Is there enough space for the number of children enrolled?	
	Are there areas for active and quiet play?	
	Are the children's furnishings in good repair?	
	Are the children exposed to second hand smoke?	
	Are there smoke detectors, fire extinguishers, radiator covers, and window safety guards?	
	If there is an outdoor play area, is it fenced in? Free of Hazards? Does it have shade?	
	Are there fire escapes if the area is above the first floor or in a basement?	
	Is there a posted fire evacuation plan? Are fire drills held quarterly?	
	From the central point in the room, can a provider see the entire area?	
	Is there an entry point where visitors can check in and out?	

	Are children signed in and out each day?	
	Are the gates/doors easily opened by children?	

CARE PROVIDER

	Clean and neatly groomed?	
	Genuinely likes children?	
	Gets down on the child's level to talk with him?	
	Has training in early childhood education or child development?	
	Trained in CPR and first aid?	
	Philosophy of discipline is similar to your own?	
	Shares your beliefs on teaching religious values and if religious values are taught, are they acceptable to you?	
	Philosophy of education for young children and daily schedule fit your expectations? (time spent in active play, passive play, TV & video appropriateness, educational goals, outside frequency)	
	If a family care provider, does she have a back-up care if ill or on vacation?	
	Positively reinforces good behavior; enhances child's self-esteem?	

ACTIVITIES

	Daily schedules are balanced? (naps, play time, story time, activity time, individual time, outside time)	
	Activities are appropriate to age group?	
	Meals and snacks are provided?	
	Toys and equipment are clean, safe, age-appropriate and at a child's level to be reached?	
	Girls and boys are encouraged to participate in the same activities?	
	If child is transported, are seat belts and child safety seats available?	

PARENT'S ROLE

	Unannounced visits are encouraged?	
	Provider always available to answer questions?	
	Provider shares child's activities with you on a daily basis?	
	Are you encouraged to give your opinion on what, if anything needs to be changed?	
	Formal parent/provider conferences/reports on your child's development are offered regularly?	
	Program provides a variety of opportunities for parent involvement?	

IMPRESSIONS

	You hear sounds of happy children.	
	You see positive interactions between child and provider.	
	The atmosphere is bright, pleasant.	
	The discipline practices are acceptable.	
	Learning opportunities are plentiful and exciting.	

INFANTS AND TODDLERS

	Records are kept on feeding, sleeping, diapering, developmental milestones and are provided to parents on a daily basis?	
	Food is provided?	
	Diapers are provided?	
	Will provider use cloth diapers, if requested?	
	The child is held when fed?	
	Infant playpens, swings, and toys are available as well as floor space to crawl on?	
	Safe toys are on low shelves within the children's reach?	
	Providers hold, "coo" and nurture the babies?	
	Children have gross motor opportunities and are taken outside frequently?	
	Infants are checked on a regular basis for wet diapers?	
	Changing area is safe and sanitary – providers wash hands after each diaper change?	
	The sleeping area is in a quiet location?	
	Plans are in place for clean sheets and blankets?	

TWO YEAR OLDS

	The schedule and curriculum are posted on a day/week basis?	
	Does the classroom have enough space for children to move around freely?	
	Do providers use positive guidance and demonstrate skills in helping children make independent choices?	
	Are potty chairs or child-size toilets available?	
	Are safe climbing/gross motor toys available?	
	Are duplicates of favorite toys available?	
	Are classroom rules appropriate, clear, and easy to follow?	
	Are children encouraged to do things by themselves such as feeding, dressing, choosing toys, and activities?	

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN (3, 4, AND 5 YEAR OLDS)

	Do learning centers provide opportunities for active and quiet learning?	
	Are daily/weekly schedules listed with education goals and objectives?	
	Are independent choices encouraged?	

	Does the provider help make children feel good about themselves by being attentive and accepting?	
	Do children have access to quality literature and are read too often?	
	Are fieldtrips arranged on a monthly basis?	
	Do guidance strategies encourage self-control and use of appropriate social skills?	

SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

	Are there other children close to your child's age?	
	Does the program have craft projects, sports equipment, drama activities, and games that would interest a broad spectrum of child types?	
	Do program providers give supervision, but also understand the older child's need for independence?	
	Are children free to relax, talk with friends, do homework or read a book during unstructured time?	

WARNING SIGNS

Knowing what you shouldn't see in a child care setting is almost as important as knowing what should be there. Following are some things you should never see. If you do, it should be a warning that perhaps this is not the provider or program for you. If the situation is bad enough, you may feel a need to report the provider to the state licensing authorities.

YOU SHOULD NEVER SEE:

	A provider physically discipline a child (hitting, shaking, spanking)	
	Babies left crying for long period of time or children left unattended	
	A child left out of sight and hearing of other children as a form of punishment	
	Babies left in cribs, playpens, or infant seats for a long time	
	Babies not being held during feeding	
	Children being shamed or forced into potty training	
	Providers making fun of children for any reason	
	Children running or playing without adult supervision	
	Small items or food that children could choke on	
	Food used as a bribe or punishment	
	A child scolded harshly or embarrassed in front of the other children	
	Babies in a wet or messy diaper for a long period of time	