Choosing Child Care Checklist

Which is the best place for my child to be cared for while I work or go to school?

UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE

Finding good care for your children is very important! You want them to be cared for in ways that will help them grow and be happy.

As you look for a good place for your children, you probably want a place that is close to your home or work and a place that is affordable. These are important things to consider as you start to think about care.

In addition to being close and affordable, the quality of the care is very important! The questions below are intended to help you think about which child care program will provide the best care for your child. There are questions you could ask the program director, some for the teachers, and other things that you will want to observe as you visit the classroom.

As you visit the first facility, you could put a plus sign (+) in the column next to any question where that program does well. You could put a zero (0) by those items where they are just okay. You might put a minus sign (-) by those areas that don't seem right. There is no system for adding up points. This checklist just allows you to see what matters and how each program seems to do on those things.

We hope you find a child care program that will be a great place for your child!

	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3
Questions to ask yourself:			
Is the child care program close to my work or home?			
Do I feel comfortable there?			
Questions to ask your friends:			
What do people who have children there say about it?			
Would you send your child there?			
Questions to ask the director or primary caregiver:			
Does this child care program accept vouchers for payment?			
Can parents visit at any time?			
What training does the program provide for teachers?			
What accreditation does the child care program have?			
How long do workers typically stay with the same group of children?			
How many children does each teacher take care of?			
Does someone watch the children at all times, even during naps?			
Are the teachers trained in CPR and First Aid?			
Do all staff get at least 15 hours per year of child care training?			
What happens if my child gets sick or hurt? Will I be called?			
How will I know what is going on during the day?			
Is information sent home or posted in the facility?			
Will the program staff help my child make a smooth transition to your care?			
Is there an opportunity to talk to my child's teacher at the end of the day?			
What is the policy for sick children?			
Does the program administer medicine?			

	Site 1	Site 2	Site 3
Questions to ask the teacher or provider:			
Does your child care program have structured time and free time?			
How much time do children spend outdoors each day?			
How often are the toys cleaned?			
Are there enough toys for all the children?			
Are children allowed to explore?			
Is there a daily schedule with a lesson plan?			
Do most learning activities happen in small groups or one-on-one?			
Are there regularly scheduled nutritious meals and snacks?			
Do children have to bring their own food?			
What is the policy on potty training?			
How do you handle fighting?			
What do you do to prevent fighting and behavior problems?			
How are the rules explained to the children?			
Things to observe when you visit the outdoor play area:			
Is there a safe outdoor play area with sturdy equipment?			
Is the outside play area fenced in?			
Is there enough space for the children to move freely?			
Is there a shady area for the children to play?			
Things to observe when you visit the child care program:			
Would your child enjoy the activities that are available?			
Do the children seem to feel comfortable and happy?			
Do the providers seem to enjoy being with the children?			
Do the providers play and talk with the children?			
Do you hear pleasant conversations among children and staff?			
Do the providers respond quickly to the children's needs?			
Are the children well supervised at all times?			
Are the children greeted when they arrive?			
Is the child care facility clean?			
Does the child care program seem safe?			
Is there an area for children to nap?			
Are materials on shelves accessible to children?			
Is the room organized?			
Is there child sized furniture?			
Are the restrooms clean?			
Are the restrooms close to my child's room?			

As you ask these questions, pay attention to how the staff treat you and the children in their care. Be sure you feel good about the people who will care for your child. You may find it difficult to evaluate some of the answers you get to these questions. To learn more about quality child care, visit the websites of the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies at *www.naccrra.org* and Child Care Aware at *www.childcareaware.org*.

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