

Finding Quality Child Care- Centre Based Child Care

Once you have identified your child care needs, decide which program is best for your family. You should keep in mind the following questions when visiting a program.

Finding quality child care takes time, patience and planning. We suggest you visit as many child care programs to observe and compare. Give yourself plenty of time. When it comes to your children, there are no bargains, only options. For more information please call Children's Services. Your local Ontario Early Years Centre may also be able to help you.

- Were you greeted upon arrival?
- Were you given a tour of the entire program?
- Did the children seem happy? Were they playing, interacting and exploring materials and equipment?
- Is the child care license clearly posted? Ask the supervisor to explain any conditions or provisions on the license.
- What are the hours of operation?
- What is the centre's policy on child illness?
- Does the staff belong to the College of Early Childhood Educators?
- What supplies are parents responsible for?
- Were you given a parent handbook?
- How much notice is required if you wish to discontinue service?
- What are the policies/ guidelines in case of emergencies?
- Who is allowed to pick up your child from the centre and how is this handled?
- What is the centre's policy on unacceptable behaviour?
- Are visitors welcome and how are they identified?
- Does the centre have a written daily program showing what the children will be doing?
- Do the children go on field trips?

- Does the centre have a mission statement?
- How are the children transported on field trips?
- Did the supervisor explain the staff to child ratios for your child's classroom?
- Are special needs children included in activities?
- Are parents able to drop in for a visit?
- Is there a Parent Advisory Board and are parents welcome to join?
- What kind of daily communication is there for parents?
- Is there a place for each child's personal belongings?
- Are criminal reference checks performed and kept up to date on all staff and volunteers?

The Playroom

- Is the playroom clean, bright and well ventilated?
- Is the playroom warm and welcoming?
- Is it a child-friendly environment?
- Is the sleeping area clean and comfortable?
- Are there a wide variety of age appropriate toys and activities available?
- Are a variety of activity centres available, (i.e. art, block area, house areas, water and sand play)?
- Do the children go outside daily?
- Is outdoor play supervised?
- Is the outdoor play area fenced in?
- Do teachers and children interact during outdoor play?
- Are activities planned for outdoors?

Health and Safety

- Are all the toys and equipment cleaned on a regular basis?
- Is the equipment safe and in good condition?

- Does the equipment meet current health and safety standards?
- Is the equipment and furniture child sized?
- Are medications locked and out of children's reach?
- Are dangerous objects out of children's reach?
- Does staff disinfect diapering area and wash their hands before and after each use?
- Do children wash their hands after toileting and before eating?
- Do toilets offer privacy but allow adequate supervision?
- Does each child have his or her own clearly labeled cot?
- How are the sheets and blankets cleaned?
- Can children bring their own toys or blankets from home?
- Where is the First Aid kit?
- Is staff trained in First Aid & CPR?
- Are emergency procedures posted?
- Are monthly fire drills performed?

Meals

- Is the menu plan posted and followed?
- Are children provided with two healthy snacks and a nutritious lunch each day?
- Do the meals and snacks follow Canada's Food Guide?
- Does staff eat with the children?
- Are food allergies posted?
- What happens if a child has an allergic reaction?
- What happens if a child is unable to eat planned meals or snacks
- What is the centre's policy on religious or cultural diet restrictions?

Centre Administration

- Is there a space available for your child?
- If there is no space currently available, is there a wait list?
- What are the centre's fees?
- Is there a discount if two or more children are registered?
- Are receipts issued for tax purposes?
- Is there an additional registration charge?
- What is the payment schedule (monthly, bi-weekly, weekly)?
- What is the vacation policy?
- Is a deposit required?