

Finding Quality Home 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?
- Is the provider qualified and/or experienced?
- Is the provider affectionate and responsive to the needs of your child?
- Is the provider calm, caring and enthusiastic when speaking directly to your child?
- Are the children ever left unsupervised?
- Does the provider's child care philosophy and behaviour management techniques match yours?
- Is the provider sensitive to your views and values of child care?
- How is the information shared between the provider and the parent?
- Is back up available if the provider becomes ill or on vacation?
- Is the provider certified in CPR and First Aid?
- Has a criminal reference check been done on the provider?

Does the provider:

- Invite you to visit at any time?
- Display a positive attitude toward bottle weaning, diapering, toilet training, behaviour management and children with special needs?
- Offer praise and positive reinforcement to each child?
- Encourage children to express their thoughts and feelings and listen with interest and respect?
- Help children gain an awareness of other people's feelings and how their actions affect others?
- Interact with children at their height level (i.e. on a chair or crouching on the floor)?
- Take time every day for meaningful conversation with each child?
- Read to the children and make books accessible to them?
- Seek information about the family's cultural traditions and use the information in planning activities?
- Take advantage of and build on the many natural learning experiences associated with daily life in a home?
- Have any training or use support groups (i.e. play groups, library, Early Years Centres)?
- Give you information about your child's development, daily activities, mood, diet and sleep?
- Have social support of friends, family, other providers and/or community organizations?
- Have some way of keeping family/child information current and accessible?

The Child Care Provider's Home

- Does the home offer a clean, safe, secure and stimulating environment?
- Is the room set up to allow easy supervision?
- Is there a flexible yet predictable daily routine?
- Are children in care happy and playing?
- Are there a variety of activity areas for quiet and active times, such as outdoor play, dramatic play, quiet reading, creative area and blocks?
- Is children's artwork displayed at the child's eye level?
- What kind of different activities are offered on a daily basis?
- Are there a variety of activities, which focus on gross motor skills, such as sliding, climbing, running and riding?
- Does outdoor play include programmed activities beyond free play such as painting, water play, gross motor activities and other creative activities?
- Do children go outdoors regularly for fresh air and exercise?
- Do the provider and children interact during outdoor play?
- Is the outdoor play area large with both sun and shade?
- What are the children's sleeping arrangements? How are children supervised when sleeping?
- Does each child have a place to store outerwear and extra clothing?
- Does the provider have pets? Are they inoculated?

Health and Safety

- Is the home child proofed according to the age of the children in care?
- Are toys and equipment safe, in good condition and cleaned and disinfected regularly?
- Are toys and equipment age appropriate?

- Are children's paint, markers and glue non-toxic?
- Are dangerous objects, such as adult scissors, out of children's reach?
- Are children's sleeping cots or cribs, bedding and comfort toys cleaned on a regular basis?
- Is the ground beneath climbing equipment soft (i.e. sand or an approved playground surface)?
- Is the play area fenced in a way that a child cannot climb over, under or through the fence?
- Does equipment meet current safety standards?
- Are safety precautions in place, such as fire extinguishers, smoke alarms, electrical outlet covers and emergency exits?
- Are cleaning supplies and medicines stored in a locked cabinet, inaccessible to children?
- Will additional adults or children be present during lunch, after school, etc?
- Will older children/spouse be home during the day?
- How many other children (including care provider's own) will receive care?
- Does the provider thoroughly wash their hands whenever they change a diaper, help a child to the toilet, prepare food, feed a baby or wipe a nose?
- Are runny noses attended to immediately, using a fresh tissue for each child?
- Are personal hygiene products provided?
- What is the provider's policy on administering medication?
- What is the provider's policy on accidents, injuries and illness?
- Is smoking permitted in the house?
- Can children bring their own toys and blankets from home?
- Where is the First Aid kit?

Meals

- Is a menu plan posted and followed?
- What happens if children are unable to eat what is planned?
- Are food allergies posted?
- What happens if a child has an allergic reaction?
- Do the meals and snacks follow *Canada's Food Guide*?
- Is food prepared, served and stored in a hygienic manner?
- Do the children and the care provider share quiet, social interaction at meal times?
- Does the provider respond calmly, in a good natured manner to spills and messes?
- What is the provider's policy on religious or cultural diet restrictions?

Administration

- Is there a space available for your child?
- If there is no space currently available, is there a wait list?
- What are the care provider's fees?
- Is there a discount if two or more children are registered?
- Does the provider issue receipts?
- What is the payment schedule (monthly, bi-weekly, weekly)?
- What type of notice must be given if you wish to discontinue care?
- Does the provider have liability coverage?