

Choosing a Good Day Care



- • Ask questions of the staff.
- Talk to parents of other children at the day care center.
- Look over the center carefully.

What should I ask when I visit the day care site?

Ask about the child to staff ratio.

- How many children are there for each staff member? A ratio of one staff person for 6 to 8 small children is recommended. One staff member for 10 to 14 older children may be okay.
- Are the younger and older children separated? Keeping younger and older children separated reduces the number of infections that are passed around.

Ask about the center's policies.

- What are the center's policies on discipline and other important issues?
- Are the policies in writing? (Ask to see a copy.)

Ask about staff training.

- What are the training requirements for staff members?
- Are all staff members certified in basic first aid?
- Are all staff members trained in child development?
- Are all staff members trained in identification of abused children?
- Are all staff members trained in preventing illness and injury?
- Does the center have rules about hand-washing?

Ask how the center cares for sick children.

- Does the center have a "sick room" for children with minor illnesses?
- Is there a nurse or doctor to help with medical care?
- Does each child need to have vaccinations or a physical exam before enrolling?
- Does the day care center keep a record of health-related problems, such as illnesses, injuries and accidents, for each child?
- How is medicine given?
- How are parents told about illness among the children?
- When must children stay home because of illness?



What should I look for when I do a site visit?

Check building safety.

- Are poison control phone numbers and ambulance phone numbers clearly posted?
- Are there smoke alarms throughout the building?
- Does the center use space heaters, which might burn the children?
- Are safety gates used in areas for small children?
- Are electric outlets covered?
- Are sharp corners of furniture covered?
- Are the toys kept clean? Washable toys should be washed every day with a disinfectant cleaner.
- Does the day care staff regularly clean all surfaces?



Check playground safety.

- Does the playground have soft surfaces, such as wood chips, under the swings and slides?
- Are young children prevented from getting to high or dangerous places?
- Are the children safe from strangers?

Check the day care safety policies.

- Are fire drills held at least every month?
- Is there an emergency evacuation plan in place?

What can I do to keep the day care safe for my child?

- Visit with the staff at the day care center. Go to meetings for family members.
- Ask your child every day about what happened at day care.

What are signs that there are problems?

- The staff fails to answer your questions and address your concerns.
- There is no way for parents to be kept up-to-date on the day care practices.
- Your child tells you about problems or is not happy with his or her day care.
- Unexplained accidents that happen more than once.
- The staff changes often.
- The management staff can't offer you a written copy of the day care policies.
- Other parents tell you about problems or concerns with the day care center.

If you suspect there are problems, contact the state agency that governs day care centers in your area.