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Our
Community

Selecting Quality Child Care Tips

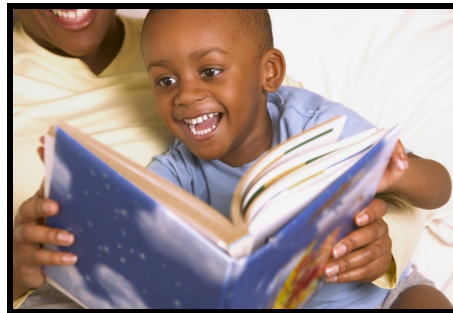
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Selecting Quality Child Care Tips

What is Quality Child Care?

There are many different types of care and many different environments for children. No matter what type of care you are looking for there are some basic things to look for when judging the quality of the care. Be sure to look for care that will let your child feel safe, happy, and secure with plenty of opportunities for play and exercise.



Child/Teacher Ratio & Group Size:

- The number of children per adult in a child care arrangement is the child teacher ratio.
- This has a direct impact on how much individual attention your child will receive and how well their needs are met.
- In general, children do better in smaller groups rather than larger ones.

Physical Environment:

- Physical space should be organized so children know where things are and how they can be found.
- The layout of space affects children's behavior, so space should be divided into areas where 2-6 children can work and play together.
- All children, young ones in particular, need soft adult laps and a variety of soft toys and other materials.
- Children need small, quiet places when they need to have some time to themselves.

Staff Training:

- Caregivers who are trained in child development or early childhood education and/or who have experience with children generally do a better job than those who do not.
- Child care providers and teachers should also regularly take courses to continue their education and training.

Education Environment:

- There is no one type of program that is proven to be more effective, but it has been found that programs with clear goals and goal orientated staff training have a positive effect on children.
- The program should include a wide variety of activities that your child can choose from.

Status with Regulatory Agency:

- Parents should always check with the proper regulatory agency to see if there have been any complaints or concerns with the child care program.

Discipline:

- Guidance and discipline should be applied in a positive way that helps the child and does not humiliate them.
- Care givers that use positive ways of disciplining children generally provide higher quality care.

Parental Involvement:

- The quality of care is generally higher when providers and parents openly share information.
- Parents should feel welcome to visit at any time while their child is in care and feel open to discuss any problems or concerns.

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☆☆ YoungStar is a voluntary ☆☆☆
☆☆ five star quality rating and ☆☆☆
☆☆ improvement program the ☆☆☆
☆☆ WI Department of Children ☆☆☆
☆☆ and Families created to sup- ☆☆☆
☆☆ port families in identifying ☆☆☆
☆☆ quality care. ☆☆☆
☆☆ • Programs meet certain ☆☆☆
☆☆ quality standards ☆☆☆
☆☆ at 2, 3, 4, and 5 stars. ☆☆☆
☆☆ • This information, ☆☆☆
☆☆ along with your visit ☆☆☆
☆☆ and evaluation of ☆☆☆
☆☆ programs, are key to ☆☆☆
☆☆ making good choices ☆☆☆
☆☆ about child care. ☆☆☆
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Telephone Interview Questions and Tips

Telephone interviewing is a good way to gather some basic information and will give you a feel for the program.

Before calling, consider what time of the day it is. Try to call during naptime (generally early afternoon) when the provider may have more time to talk with you rather than during lunch, when they are busy feeding the children.

When you call, introduce yourself, state how you received their name and why you are calling. If it's a center, ask for the director or someone who would know about openings. Give the provider the name, age, gender of your child and when you need the care to begin. Ask if it is a good time to ask some questions.

Ask the questions you are comfortable with. You don't need to find everything out right away.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- Do you have any openings?
- Do you have a waiting list?
- What are your hours?
- How long have you been working with children?
- What is the average group size?
- How many children are full-time? How many are part-time?
- What are your fees and what does that include?
- When do you expect payment?
- Are there any additional fees?
- Do you offer a sliding fee scale?
- Does anyone in the home smoke?
- Do you have any pets?
- When can I come and visit? (Make sure you verify the address and get directions)
- Do you have a website to visit?

Call and visit more than one program so you can compare!

BE SURE TO LISTEN FOR

- Clear, professional responses
- Unwanted background noises



Visiting and Interviewing Family Child Care Providers

Before making your final decision about your child's care, it's essential to take the time to visit the programs and interview the providers. Visit the provider more than once and at different times of the day so you can get a good feeling for the program.

Also, when you are close to making a decision, bring your child along on a visit to see how your child and the provider interact with each other.



SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- Tell me about yourself.
- How did you decide to become a child care provider?
- What experience/training have you had with children?
- May I see a copy of your certificate or license?
- How long are you planning to do child care?
- Do you have substitute or back-up care available?
- Can I visit at anytime?
- What is your policy about vacation, sick and holiday time?
- Who else is in the home when the children are here?
- Do you transport the children and do you have a valid driver's license?
- What happens if my child gets sick or hurt?
- Can I speak with the parents who have used your care in the past?
- Can you describe a typical day my child would have here?
- Do you post a schedule of activities/meals/snacks?
- Where do the children nap?
- What do you do in emergency situations?
- Do you have a current First Aid and/or CPR certificate?
- How do you handle discipline?
- Do you have any house rules?
- What would you do if we disagree about something?
- Can I see a copy of your contract and policies?
- Can you provide a list of references?
- Can I speak with the parents who are currently using your care?
- Are you participating in the Young Star Program?
- What is your Young Star rating?

Trust your instincts when you interview. Any negative feelings are usually a good sign that the arrangement will not work out.

Look for

- Proper child/adult ratios.
- Clean, safe, child proof, odor-free environment.
- Space for indoor and outdoor play, plus napping, eating, toileting, and hand washing areas.
- Responsive, warm interactions between the provider and children.
- Variety of toys and learning materials that your child will find interesting and contribute to their growth and development.
- Enough high chairs, booster seats and child-sized furniture.

Visiting and Interviewing Group Centers

SAMPLE QUESTIONS



- Do you have any openings?
- What are your hours?
- What is the daily/weekly fee?
- Do you also provide part-time care?
- Are there days that your center is closed?
- Is there a fee for days that you are closed?
- Will I be charged for days when my child is absent?
- Are there any additional fees for registration, field trips, late payment?
- Do you offer a multi-child or family discount?
- Are meals provided?
- What is the capacity of the center?
- How many children would be in my child's group?
- How many teachers would be in my child's group?
- How many different adults would be with my child throughout the day?
- What is your staff turnover rate?
- What can you tell me about you and your staff's education and experience?
- What type of training does the center staff receive annually?
- What would a typical day be like for my child?
- What is the center's discipline policy?
- What are your policies regarding ill children?
- How is administering of medications documented?

Ask for clarification if you do not completely understand a policy.

- What precautions are taken about who picks up my child?
- How are accidents documented?
- What violations have you had in the past year?
- Are daily activities documented through lesson plans or daily notes?
- Could you give me the names of two or three parents to call for references?
- Do you conduct regular parent teacher conferences?
- Are you participating in the Young Star Program?
- What is your Young Star rating?

Child Care Checklist

Basic Information	
	Do I understand the child care provider's rules and policies?
	Am I required to pay for sick days, holidays, snow days, vacations, etc.?
	Is notice required before withdrawing my child?
	Are meals, diapers, etc. included in the fee?
	Is there a written contract or agreement, and do I completely agree and understand it?

Health and Safety	
	Are detergents, cleaners and medicines in a locked cabinet?
	Are electrical outlets covered with safety caps?
	Are household items like knives and scissors stored out of reach of children?
	Is the weekly/monthly menu planned and posted for parents to see?
	Staff are trained in First Aid/CPR/SIDS if applicable?
	Are first aid supplies readily available?
	Is the space clean and odor free?
	Are safety procedures for tornadoes, fire, etc. practiced regularly? Are they documented?
	Are toys and play areas sanitized daily?
	Is there a policy in place on caring for a sick child?
	Is there a procedure for notifying parents of a child's illness or distress?
	Do they have a policy and procedure for handling children's injuries?
	Are emergency numbers and procedures clearly posted?
	Is there a fire escape plan posted by each exit?
	Is the outdoor area safe to get to, is it fenced in and free of hazards?
	Are there precautions taken concerning drop-off and pick-up procedures?
	Are the heat, light and ventilation appropriate?
	Are smoke detectors and fire extinguishers inspected regularly and in place?
	Is the license or certification clearly posted?
	Are diapering/toileting areas and procedures safe and sanitary?
	Is hand washing required after diaper changes and toileting?
	Is hand washing required before and after meal times?
	Are bathrooms clean and can children safely reach the toilet and sink?

Child Care Checklist

Staff	
	Do the caregivers regularly attend training courses?
	Does the program have qualified substitutes in case of staff illness or vacation?
	Does the provider have training and experience in child development or early childhood?
	Is care consistent and is there a minimal amount of teacher turnover?

Program Structure	
	Does the daily schedule include active and quiet times?
	Is there a regularly scheduled outdoor time each day?
	Do you feel comfortable with the amount of TV shown while the child is in care?
	Does the program use positive guidance techniques?
	Is the daily schedule flexible to meet the child's needs?
	Are children allowed to make choices?
	Is problem-solving among children encouraged?
	Is a daily schedule posted and followed?
	Are children treated with respect?
	Do adults provide support through actions and words?
	Do I understand and agree with the philosophy of the program?
	Are providers positive, patient and accepting?
	Does the program welcome the culture and language of my child?
	Can activities be adapted to meet the special needs of my child?
	Are there an accurate number of adults present for the age group?
	Does the provider talk with the children, not at them?
	Is the environment cheerful, warm and inviting?
	Do the caregivers encourage the children to do some things for themselves?
	Does the program promote positive physical, mental and emotional health?
	Are children able to use creative materials, rather than coloring books?
	Do the providers use discipline and guidance methods similar to your own?
	Are there opportunities for parent involvement?
	Does the program welcome an open-door policy and encourage parents to visit?





Child Care Checklist

Space and Furnishings	
	Is there a safe and relaxed setting for nap/rest time?
	Does each child have their own place to store personal belongings?
	Are materials and furniture in good repair?
	Are the shelves at the child's level?
	Is the artwork displayed at the child's eye level?
	Are there enough paints, blocks, musical toys, games, puzzles, etc?
	Notice the layout of the room. Is there enough space?
	Is the toilet convenient for the children to get to?
	Are well-maintained story and picture books available for the children?

Young Star Rating: _____

NOTES:

The child care checklist can be helpful as a guide when visiting providers. However, it is important to trust your instinct as well.



Checking References

Checking references is an important step of your child care search which should not be overlooked. Making sure that, not only does the appearance of the prospective provider look and sound good, but that the provider also is highly recommended for their quality care helps you make a more sound decision about your child's care.

Here is some information to assist you when making calls to prospective provider's references:

- When calling a prospective child care provider's references make sure to introduce yourself. Tell the reference that you are considering this person as a possible caregiver for your child or children.
- Let the person know that the provider has provided you with his or her name and phone number as a reference, and you would like to ask them some questions in regard to that provider.

SAMPLE QUESTIONS

- How do you know the caregiver?
- How long have you known the caregiver?
- Was the caregiver reliable?
- Did they provide care for your children?
- Have you observed the caregiver around children?
- Describe the types of activities that the caregiver planned. Were they age appropriate?
- Was the caregiver organized and able to multi-task?
- What types of discipline methods were used by the caregiver?
- How did the caregiver interact with you as a parent?
- How did the caregiver interact with the children?



- Would you recommend the caregiver?
- If your child is no longer in care with the care giver, why did you leave?

No matter what type of program you choose, the way the provider responds to your child's ideas will have an effect on the quality of care they are receiving.

Wisconsin Child Care Regulations

There are two major types of child care settings:
Family Child Care and Child Care Centers.

Who Must Be Regulated?

- Family Child Care Providers caring for 1-3 children whose care is paid for by the county
- Family Child Care Providers caring for 4 or more children under age 7
- All Child Care Centers



Other Regulations:

- A child care program must have 2 or more stars to be eligible to accept WI Shares funding.
- Anyone over age 18 may care for up to 3 children in addition to their own without being regulated unless caring for county-funded children.

Types of Regulations

Certified Family Child Care providers care for 3 or fewer children under age 7 in addition to their own. They must have 20 hours of Early Childhood training. Dane County requires an additional 5 hours of continuing education annually. No more than 6 children may be in the group at one time. Counties are responsible for certifying providers.

Provisionally Certified Family Child Care providers may care for 3 or fewer children under age 7 in addition to their own. There may be no more than 6 children in the group at one time. No education or training is required.



Licensed Family Child Care providers may care for 4 or more children under age 7. No more than 8 children may be in care at one time, including the providers' children under age 7 and any additional children above age 7. Licensed providers must have 40 hours of Early Childhood training and complete 15 additional training hours annually.

Licensed Child Care Centers are programs that serve 9 or more children. Each center must meet specific regulations of ratios of caregivers to children and group size. Staff must meet training requirements including annual continuing education.



Regulatory Agency Telephone Numbers

The most current information regarding complaints or concerns can be obtained by contacting the following regulatory agency:

County	For LICENSED family child care <u>or</u> group centers	For CERTIFIED family child care	For PROVISIONAL- LY CERTIFIED family child care
Kenosha	262-521-5100	262-656-8420	262-656-8420
Milwaukee	262-521-5100	414-289-6061	414-289-6061
Ozaukee	920-448-5312	262-284-8205	262-284-8205
Racine	262-521-5100	262-638-6511	262-638-6511
Washington	920-448-5312	262-335-4687	262-335-4687
Waukesha	262-521-5100	262-548-7250	262-548-7250

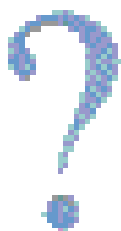
Please visit the following website to locate regulatory history over the previous 2 years:
www.dcf.wisconsin.gov/childcare/licensed/search.htm

At this website you can review the facility's licensing and/or certification information including compliance history and enforcement actions.

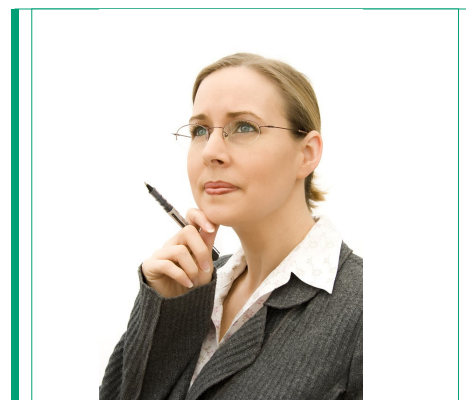


No Openings—Now What?

You call everyone on the list provided and no one has an opening that can meet your needs, what do you do next? Following are some suggestions:



- Re-contact 4C-For Children another list. We could expand the radius of the areas searched or add additional areas to the search. This would increase the options available to you. If you have any flexibility with hours or days that care is needed, we could also change those criteria and search the areas again.
- Ask if you could visit the program, even if they do not have a current opening. You would then be able to know if this is a program you would like to choose if an opening became available.
- If you have found a program that you would like to use, ask if you could be placed on a waiting list. Availability can change quickly and an opening may come up unexpectedly.
- Make a short-term plan for child care. Contact 4C-For Children again in a few months to see if new providers may have been added in the areas you are interested in.
- Ask the provider that does not currently have an opening if they know of someone in the area that **does** have current availability.
- Talk to friends, neighbors, and people at your library, church or community center who may have faced the same problems. How did they solve them?
- Discuss your child care need with your employer and with co-workers. If many of you are having the same difficulties, your employer needs to know.





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Quality child care requires a commitment from both parents and providers who form a close working relationship for the well-being of the child.

That commitment begins with a search for child care.

We wish you well in your
child care search!

The Staff of 4C-For Children

Find us:



Child Care Referrals • Provider Certification • Child and Adult Care
Food Program • Provider Professional Development

