

Tips for Selecting a Child Care Provider

EAP Article Series



You want the best for your children. That's why finding child care can sometimes be a difficult and emotional process. High-quality child care isn't always easy to identify, so keeping your child's safety, health, and developmental needs in mind when searching for a caregiver is key.

Many types of child care options are available—from at-home care to child care centers—so it's essential to prioritize the needs of your family. Consider the variety of factors that could influence your decision, such as licensing standards, location, cost and curriculum, to name a few.

Do Your Research

Ask your neighbors, co-workers and pediatrician for child care recommendations in your area. Contact your local Child Care and Resource Referral (CCR&R) agency to gather information about providers and get recommendations based on your child's needs.

Some questions to ask the CCR&R:

- What are the licensing requirements in my area?
- Where can I find a copy of the health and safety inspection reports?
- Which providers in my area are nationally accredited or part of a local quality rating and improvement system?

Schedule Visits

Prepare a checklist of priority factors before you visit so you can compare how each provider meets your needs. Ask questions about their policies, qualifications and staff, and thoroughly evaluate the space and your comfort level with the environment. Be sure to ask how staff members communicate with parents to ensure open discussion of any concerns.

Consider how the program meets basic health and safety requirements, such as:

- Staff qualifications and training
- Building and space safety
- Staff to children ratio
- Infectious disease prevention

Compare and Rate Programs

Create a list of your top program preferences by using your checklist to compare. Think about what you experienced during visits, and how each program met the values and needs of your child and your family.

Talk to parents who have used the child care programs you're interested in to find out if they were satisfied with the service. And, most importantly, trust your gut. If something doesn't feel quite right with a center you're considering, keep searching.

Stay Involved

Once you've chosen a caregiver, have continued conversations with them regarding your child's care. Build a relationship with caregivers and child care staff to keep communication open. Think about opportunities you can create to stay involved.

Some examples of opportunities to get involved are:

- Share information about your child with providers, such as their likes and dislikes, events or hobbies that happen at home or outside of the care center, and their interests and abilities
- Visit often and occasionally stop in for surprise visits
- Schedule meetings with your caregiver to discuss your child's development and learning plan
- Volunteer to help out in the program or attend special events like field trips or holiday parties

Reach Out to Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

You're not alone during this process. The Mutual of Omaha EAP is here to help you find the child care resources you need — 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

References

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For additional resources and assistance, visit MutualofOmaha.com/eap or call an Employee Assistance Program professional at 1-800-316-2796.