

The Child Care Aware Program, which is a Child Care Resource and Referral Program of the National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies (NACCRRA), provides a wealth of information that could help in your search for quality child care. They call it "Child Care 101". This subpage of the Child Care Aware Website provides wonderful articles such as, "Five Steps to Choosing Child Care". It also provides a description of the various types of child care available, checklists to assist in your research of various programs, a child care calculator and other child care related articles. The Child Care Aware program also offers subscriptions to their publications. One such publication is the "Daily Parent". This publication provides regular articles on a wide-range of topics. Volume 39 of the "Daily Parent", titled, "Quality Child Care: Recognizing and Choosing the Best for Your Children", provides some statistics, as well as things to look for to help you identify the quality of a specific child care program. Click [here](#) to read the complete article.

If you are looking for child care, you probably have a good idea of what you want – a place that is safe, cheerful, and nurturing, where children can learn and have fun. Finding quality child care is going to take some time and it will require that you do your homework. Some tips for selecting a child care provider:

- ✓ Before you begin your search, make a list of the things you would like from your child care center. When you think you have found the facility of your choice, make sure that he/she or the center meets or exceeds most of the items on your "wish list".
- ✓ Know your state's licensing regulations. Do they include mandatory CPR training, frequent inspections, background checks and fingerprinting for employees?
- ✓ If the person/center has a website, read the information available on it and compile a list of questions that arise as you browse this resource. Call the person/center and ask your questions. Then check availability. If your phone interview was satisfactory and the center has availability, move on to the next step.
- ✓ Visit the facility at least once, preferably two or three times. With each visit, stay for a couple of hours and ask questions. First visit alone and if you are satisfied, make a follow up visit. Take your child this time, so that he or she can spend time there and give you some idea of how he/she would feel about the people and environment.
- ✓ Always check references. If you see parents during your visit, ask them for their thoughts.
- ✓ Remember it's ok to be selective. Review the information you have gathered and be sure that you are completely confident in your selection. If not, look around some more until you find the ideal solution for your child care needs.

To help you make an informed decision, we have provided this checklist, which has been adapted from the 38 Research-Based Indicators of High-Quality Child-Care developed by NACCRRA (National Association of Child Care Resource & Referral Agencies).

CHILD CARE CHECKLIST

CAREGIVER/CENTER	#1		#2		#3	
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
ENVIRONMENT						
Is the staff is patient, kind, responsive						
Is the staff respectful of children and parents; listening and communicating positively						
Is there a warm and overall pleasant atmosphere						
Is the area clean, organized, maintained (repair free)						
HEALTH AND SAFETY						
Do all adults and children wash their hands after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and before eating?						
Are diaper-changing tables cleaned and disinfected with a bleach solution after each use?						
Can the program show records of all the children's required shots?						
Are medicines labeled and out of children's reach? Are adults trained in giving medicines and keeping records of what was given to whom?						
All cleaning supplies and other poisonous materials kept out of reach of children						
What is the plan if a child is injured, sick or lost?						
Are first aid kits easy for adults to get to?						
Does the child care program have information about who to contact in an emergency?						
Is there a plan in place in case of disaster – fire, flood, earthquake, terrorism, etc.? What is it? (space for notes/comments provided)						
COMMENTS/NOTES:						
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Can all adults be seen by someone else at all times when with children, throughout the rooms, and/or through interior windows?						
Have all adults been trained on preventing child abuse, spotting potential signs of abuse, and on rules on reporting suspected abuse?						

CAREGIVER/CENTER	#1		#2		#3	
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
Have all adults had their backgrounds checked nationally?						
Is the outdoor play area a safe place for children to play?						
➤ Is it checked each morning for hazards before children use it?						
➤ Is the equipment the right size and type for the age of the children using it?						
➤ In the center-based programs, is the playground area surrounded by a fence at least 4 feet tall?						
➤ Is the equipment placed on mulch, sand, or rubber matting?						
➤ Is the equipment in good condition?						
Is the number of children in each group commensurate with the state regulations?						
SUPERVISION	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
Are children supervised at all times, even when they are sleeping?						
Are adults warm and welcoming? Do they pay individual attention to each child?						
Do adults handle children's behavior in positive ways, without yelling, or using any physical or negative punishment?						
Are there enough adults to serve the children? (Ask local experts about the best staff/child ratios for different age groups.)						
Do you know how many caregivers are there per group of children? (Hint: Your child will get more attention if each caregiver has fewer children to take care of.)						
LEARNING ENVIRONMENT						
For older children, is the program arranged in specific areas such as blocks, art, books, dress-up, table toys and puzzles?						
Are lesson plans posted for everyone to see? Do they allow for children to be creative and actively involved? Are children learning while they play?						
For infants and toddlers, are there toys that "do something" when the child plays with them?						
Is the play space organized and are materials easy-to-use? Are some materials available at all times?						
Are there daily or weekly activity plans available? Have the adults planned experiences for the children to enjoy? Will the activities help children learn?						
Do adults talk with children during the day? Do they engage them in conversations? Ask questions, when appropriate?						
Do the adults read to children at least twice a day or encourage them to read, if they can read?						

CAREGIVER/CENTER	#1		#2		#3	
	YES	NO	YES	NO	YES	NO
Is there an age appropriate learning program, in order to help prepare children for entering primary school?						
➤ Is it structured?						
POLICIES FOR PARENTS						
Is it ok for you to drop in any time you want to?						
Are you given written policies?						
Will you have a formal conference about your child at least once a year?						
STAFF QUALIFICATIONS/TRAINING						
If a child care center,						
➤ Does the director have a college degree and some experience, recommended to be at least two years of experience?						
➤ Does the lead teacher in the classroom have at least a credential like a CDA** and one year of experience? In family child care, does the provider have at least one year of experience working with young children?						
If a family child care home,						
➤ Has the provider had specific training on children's development and experience caring for children?						
Is everyone trained in first aid and infant/child CPR?						
Is there a training plan for everyone working with children?						
In a center, is there a written salary schedule and are there benefits?						
ADMINISTRATION						
Are written personnel policies and job descriptions available?						
Is center staff evaluated formally once a year?						
Are parents and staff surveyed annually about their satisfaction?						
Is the program as a whole evaluated annually in a formal way?						
Is the program accredited by a national organization?						

