



5 STEPS to Finding the Right Program

1. Explore

Know your options. Choose the child care setting that best meets your family needs.

2. Evaluate

Consider your preferences. For example, think about the individual learning style of your child (does he/she prefer small or large groups?)

3. Observe

Visit at least three programs before making your final decision. Interview prospective providers and talk to everyone who will be involved in your child's care. Plan to spend at least 30 to 60 minutes at each interview. Ask about the program specifics such as daily activities and schedules, discipline methods, meal service, fees, and contracts. Ask how long the children in the group have attended the program (high turnover of families can be a "red flag") and request references from current and past client families. Take your child with you to see if the program is a good fit for him or her. Pay attention to any uneasy feelings you may have. To help guide you through the interview process, we have included a checklist of things to consider on the reverse side.

4. Decide

Refer to your checklist and notes to make your decision, but, most of all, trust your instincts. Keep in mind that expensive care does not always guarantee the best program for your child and less expensive care does not necessarily mean a poor program. If you have questions about child care business practices or would like additional referrals, call Child Start.

5. Follow Up

Visit your child's early care and education program any time your child is there. Making such visits is one way to monitor the quality of care your child is receiving. If you have serious concerns about the health and safety of the program, contact the local child care licensing department immediately. Remember, you have the final responsibility for your child's care and have the right to change providers whenever you are concerned about your child's well-being or happiness.

QUALITY CHECKLIST



Child Care Regulations

- Are the proper adult/child ratios maintained? Is the adult/child ratio correct?
- Is the program legally operating according to Kansas law? Is the license or registration posted?
- Are children supervised by an adult at all times?
- Does the provider have liability insurance or a waiver of liability?
- Does the provider or staff have current training in pediatric first aid and CPR?
- Does the provider or center use appropriate car seats or safety belts for each child if children are being transported?
- Is the provider or staff knowledgeable about child development? Does the caregiver continue to keep up-to-date by attending trainings and seminars?
- What is the provider or staff's experience level for caring for children?

Health and Safety

- Is the program clean and sanitary overall (bathrooms and diapering areas, kitchen, play areas)?
- Is hand-washing regularly practiced?
- Are all areas that are used for child care child-proof and free of hazards?
- Is all equipment safe and in good repair?
- Are there working smoke detectors, fire extinguishers and a first aid kit?
- Is an emergency evacuation plan posted and practiced?
- Is there a written policy for handling accidents or injuries?
- If food is furnished at the facility, are the meals/snacks nutritionally balanced, prepared and stored in a safe manner?
- Does the provider have a back-up plan in case of a medical emergency?
- Can your baby crawl or walk safely and freely in the child care setting?
- Is the setting bright and attractive with adequate space for quiet and active play both indoors and outdoors?

Partnership with Parents

- Does the provider or staff use written agreements (e.g., fee payment, discipline policy, attendance policy) and clearly communicate the expectations and policies of the program?
- Does the provider or staff have a reference list of current and past clients available?
- Is the caregiver or staff willing to discuss your child with you?
- Are parents welcome to make unannounced visits at any time?
- Does the program have a written policy regarding children's challenging behaviors? Is the provider or staff open to discussing your family's approach to discipline?
- Does the provider or staff cooperate with parents' efforts to toilet train their child?
- Does the provider or staff tell parents about their child's achievements as well as concerns?
- Is the provider or staff accepting of your family's cultural values?

Adult/Child Interaction

- Is the provider or staff actively involved with children and following their lead?
- Is the provider or staff someone who is warm and sensitive to children's needs?
- Does the provider or staff interact respectfully with each individual children?
- Does the provider or staff give each child individual attention?
- Does the program have long term staff (3 to 5 years) and minimal staff turnover (less than 25% per year)?
- Are the children encouraged to use their imagination and creativity?
- Does the provider or staff treat each child in a positive way? For example, does the provider or staff speak to the child by name in an encouraging voice?
- Does the provider or staff have a firm but loving approach to discipline? (Note: Spanking, humiliating, neglect or abuse, withholding food or drink or restricting sleep or toileting are strictly prohibited in licensed facilities.)
- Does the provider or staff handle diapering and feeding in a gentle manner?
- Does the provider or staff spend time holding, playing with, and talking to the babies?



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