

Choosing Quality Child Care Checklist

Staff Professionalism, Training and Turnover

- What experience and education do the staff/caregivers have? Do they have their AA, BA, or MA in Early Child Education?
- Do staff receive on-going education and training to better serve children with special needs?
- How long have the staff worked at the center/home? Do staff/caregivers stay long enough to create a stable environment for children?
- What do you notice in conversations with the staff/caregiver that shows you they respect and value the cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic and lifestyle diversity of the families?

Learning Environment

- Are the activities appropriate for my child's age and interest?
- What is the typical daily schedule.
- Do the teacher's interactions encourage your child to learn? Are the activities engaging?
- Do the children watch TV, DVDs or videos? If so, how frequently?
- Do the children have plenty of active outdoor play time each day? Do they go on fieldtrips?
- Does the program reflect the cultural, ethnic, religious and lifestyle diversity of the families within the community?
- Does the staff encourage language, social, and problem-solving skills when talking with children?
- Are you comfortable with the way the provider disciplines and resolves conflicts between children?
- Does the environment feel right for your child and family? Will your child be happy there?
- Are there enough adults to care for your child? (*see ratio chart*). Is the room full to capacity or do they choose to have a lower staff to child ratio in each classroom?

Licensing and Complaints

You can find out about a program's complaint history by visiting del.wa.gov/check

- Ask to see the provider's license and Investigative Reports for the past three years.
- Ask for references of other families who have used the provider and call them to learn about their experience.

Health and Safety

- Are meals and snacks scheduled at appropriate times and do they include a variety of nutritious foods?
- Are the emergency phone numbers clearly posted. Do they have a natural disaster plan?
- Is the center/home clean and free of clutter? Does the equipment appear to be safe and in good repair?
- Are fire drills held regularly and recorded? Are any fire exits blocked? Is the fire escape plan posted?
- Is the outdoor play area safe and fenced?
- What are the security measures surrounding drop off and pick-up times? How are strangers excluded?
- Is transportation provided to school or field trips? What safety measures are followed?

Family Relationships & Involvement

- Is the discipline philosophy compatible with your family's?
- Does the program accept different subsidy payments? Are all families, regardless of economic background, welcomed?
- Is the toilet training approach compatible with yours?
- Do staff provide developmental screenings for your child and track their progress?
- Does the program prepare your child for new transitions such as Kindergarten or a new classroom. Do they include you in the process?
- Does the program have ways to ask for your feedback on your child's experience?
- Is it explained that legally, you can have free access to your child while they are in care.

Quality Improvement and Accreditation

- Is the center or home nationally accredited?
<http://www.childcare.org/families/accreditation.asp>
- Is the program participating in quality improvement efforts?

Parent Handbook

- The parent handbook is a requirement for state licensing and should include: Admission/enrollment procedures, hours, rates, meals and snacks, disciplinary philosophy, medical and emergency procedures, supplies, absences, illness, and vacation policies?