

## Interviewing School-Age Programs

If you find a child care center that might be a good match for your family, the next step is to set up a visit. It is best to schedule this interview for when children aren't coming or leaving and you can watch how the children and adults interact.

The process of finding a child care provider, this step is very much like conducting a job interview. Focus on points that are especially important to you. Set aside some time to prepare before the interview. Write down any other questions or ideas that come up. You may want someone to help you think of questions and discuss what answers you want to your questions.

You may want to bring your partner or another involved family member to the visit, but try not to bring your child. You'll want to concentrate, without distractions, on what the caregiver says. If possible, you may also want to interview the person who will actually provide care for your child. Be sure to ask discipline questions and ask what s/he likes and doesn't like about his/her job at the program. Be sure to observe the child/adult interactions carefully, too.

Name of Center: \_\_\_\_\_ Name of Director: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

How long has this program been open?

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How many children do you currently have in your program?

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What is the group size for children my child's age? What grades and schools are the children from?

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How are children transported to and from your program and their school?

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Do you and other caregivers have first aid, CPR, or other specialized training?

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What training or education do head teachers and aides have?

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Do you and your providers attend educational/child care workshops and training?

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On average, how long have the teachers and aides been with you? How many years of experience do they have?

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Are you certified or licensed in compliance with state regulations? May I see your license?

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Do you schedule regular reports or updates?

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What is your philosophy on discipline? Homework?

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What kind of activities do you plan for the children before/after school?

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How do you handle disagreements between two children in your care?

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What would you do if you had concerns about my child's development, behavior, or well-being?

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Do you offer any special programs (e.g., swimming, tutoring, or music lessons)?  
What are the fees?

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How do you differentiate "at-school" and "before/after-school" for the children?

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How do you work with parents' philosophies that differ from your own?

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What are your fees? When is payment due? Is there a discount for a second or third child? Do I pay at the site or somewhere else?

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Is there an option for part-time, drop-in or hourly care? Is there a fee for late pickups? If so, how much?

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Will I have to pay for days my child does not attend your program?

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What holidays or vacation days will your program be closed?

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Do you have backup providers? Under what circumstances would you use them?

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What do you need before my child can attend your program?

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What is your illness policy?

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Do you administer medications with permission?

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Do you have an adjustment or trial period?

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May I have a tour of the rooms and facilities that my child will use?

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Can you give me the names and phone numbers of three families to interview?

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After the interview, go through the important parts of the conversation. Make a list of the pros and cons of the issues discussed during the interview. To help you put your thoughts in order, discuss your feelings with your partner or other involved people. Once you've narrowed down your choices to one or two finalists, call each of the references that the director gives you.