

Quality Child Care Indicators

When selecting appropriate child care, parents and caregivers must consider quality, availability, and affordability.

Quality

The following check-list can help guide parents/caregivers as they observe child care programs for quality. It can also serve as a self-check list for child care programs.

Availability

A Resource and Referral counselor can provide referrals for licensed child care centers and licensed family child care homes. A referral counselor can talk to you about your child care concerns and provide a list of child care referrals based on your family's logistical needs.

Affordability

A Resource and Referral can also provide information about what to expect to pay for child care in your area. If you need help paying for child care, they can also refer you to appropriate subsidized programs in your area.



When setting up a child care program or choosing child care ask yourself the following questions:

Is the environment safe and comfortable?

- Is there ample space?
- Are the providers caring and responsive?
- Is care consistent, or is there provider turnover?
- Are providers responsive to parents concerns?
- Is the environment reasonably clean?
- Are health practices followed?
- Is the program within adult to child ratio?

Are children encouraged to feel positive about themselves and others?

- Are activities age appropriate?
- Is independence encouraged?
- Are children allowed choices throughout the day?
- Are positive guidance techniques used?
- Are limits reasonable and consistently followed?
- Is play supervised without being intrusive?

Are the children involved in meaningful activities?

- Do activities support children's natural curiosity?
- Are children allowed to explore?
- Do caregivers attempt to build on language skills?
- Do questions foster critical thinking and reasoning?
- Is positive problem-solving encouraged?
- Is there space and time for personal expression?

Is there a variety of age-appropriate play materials available?

- Is a schedule of daily activities posted and followed?
- Is there a healthy mix of activities? Is there a balance between active and quiet, large and small group, adult-directed and child-directed activities?

Is the environment child-centered?

- Are materials on shelves and accessible to the children?
- Is there child-sized furniture?
- Are furnishings in good repair?
- Are rooms organized in a way that makes sense to a child?
- Are children's projects displayed at children's eye level?

Does the environment encourage positive social behavior?

- Are rules for age appropriate behavior consistently enforced?
- Do caregivers provide reasons for rules?
- Are children encouraged to find positive solutions to conflicts?
- Are there opportunities for children to have meaningful interactions with both children and adults?
- Are children's physical developments supported through appropriate health, nutrition and safety practices?
- Are the indoor and outdoor environments safe for children?
- Are there regularly scheduled nutritious meals and snacks?
- Are activities planned which encourage physical activity?
- Is meal time pleasant?
- Is there an adequate setting and appropriate equipment for rest time?

Are efforts made to ensure consistency between home and child care?

- Is there an effort for a daily parent-provider exchange?
- Does staff ease transitions and separation felt by the child as well as the parent?
- Are parents encouraged to visit?
- Do staff and parents discuss important issues such as guidance, discipline and toilet training techniques?



If infants are present, are their needs being met?

- Are there enough caregivers to provide individual attention?
- Is scheduling flexible to meet individual infant needs?
- Do caregivers respond promptly to signs of distress?
- Are toys and play areas sanitized daily?
- Are diapering areas sanitary and do caregivers wash after every diaper change?

National Network for Child Care; ncc.org and Child Care Aware; childcareaware.org