



## **HOW TO CHOOSE A CHILDCARE PROVIDER**

Choosing a childcare provider can be one of the most unnerving, challenging decisions new and even established parents may face. Of course, each of us wants only the absolute best for our children: the best opportunities, the best resources, and the very best care while we are at work. As you journey through this decision-making process, we want to ease your mind by equipping you with some tools and tips to help you with your search.

When seeking the childcare provider that is right for your family, consider these things:

*Location* – How far are you willing to drive to drop off and pick up your child? Make sure you will be able to work around the provider's open hours.

*Price* – How much are you willing and able to pay? Keep in mind that most providers will institute a rate increase annually.

*Program* – What do you want a childcare provider to offer your child educationally, socially and spiritually?

*Facility* - What resources do you want to be available to your child in a childcare facility?

Once you answer these questions, schedule time to take tours of any childcare facilities that appear to meet your initial standards. Then, as you tour, use the following checklist to make sure the provider in question is worthy of serving your family.

### **PROGRAM & FACILITY**

#### **Y / N**

- ( ) ( ) Do they offer a center-based creative curriculum to encourage your child's development?
- ( ) ( ) Are the children separated by age and given specific developmental attention?
- ( ) ( ) Is there ample learning equipment in the classroom?
- ( ) ( ) Are computers located in classrooms for children's use?
- ( ) ( ) Do the classrooms have child-size chairs, tables and equipment?
- ( ) ( ) Do the children appear happy and stimulated?
- ( ) ( ) Are there parent/teacher conferences held to discuss your child's development?
- ( ) ( ) Do teachers evaluate children's developmental progress regularly?
- ( ) ( ) Do the children receive individualized attention?
- ( ) ( ) Does the childcare provider maintain an Open Door Policy?
- ( ) ( ) Are there extracurricular activities available for your child during the day?

## **PLAYGROUND**

- Are there separate age-specific play areas?
- Are the staff-to-child ratios met on the playground at all times?
- Is the playground area fenced? Are the gates secure?
- Does the equipment inspire creative play?
- Is there a place for children to run and play, in case inclement weather does not allow them to go outside?

## **CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT**

- Do teachers have specific, consistent methods for handling behavior issues?
- Do children appear to respond to teachers' instructions?
- Do teachers communicate daily with parents regarding their child's day?

## **DIRECTOR AND STAFF**

- Does the director have education, experience and training in childcare management?
- Does the center provide staff in-service training?
- Are the teachers required to pursue higher education?
- Are the teachers experienced in early childhood education?
- Are staff members background checked and drug tested prior to employment?
- Is the staff cheerful, friendly and helpful?

## **FOOD**

- Are meals and snacks nutritionally balanced and planned by a registered dietitian?
- Are the menus posted and rotated?
- Are infants held when fed?
- Are snacks and meals included in your child's tuition?
- Does the provider make food substitutions for children with allergies?

## **HEALTH & SAFETY**

- Are monthly fire drills held? Quarterly tornado drills?
- Are evacuation plans posted?
- Are there fire alarms located throughout the building?
- Are the exits from each room clearly marked?
- Is there always someone on campus with current CPR and First Aid certifications?
- Is child pick-up and drop-off safe and well planned?
- Is safe transportation available for your child?
- Is the provider able to administer medications that you bring for your child?
- Are the doors to hallways and outside doors secure and monitored?

As you walk through a childcare facility completing this checklist, you will most likely think of a number of other questions to ask that are specific to your child. Ask every question you have. A good childcare provider will encourage you to ask questions and will offer open, detailed answers. When you can leave a childcare facility tour with a sigh of relief and a smile, you have most likely found the provider that is right for you.