

Watch Me Grow

Choosing child care checklist

What is important to you and your family when choosing child care: Cost? Hours? Other things? It may help you to take this checklist along when visiting sites. Before you visit, pick the top things on the checklist that are most important to you, and ask about them during your visit.

What will my child do during the day?

- Are there planned activities that help my child learn (quiet and active, indoor and outdoor)?
- Will my child have time every day to run, catch, climb and throw?
- Do children have time to play on their own and can they get to toys and activities?
- Is TV and computer time limited?
- Is the space comfortable, organized and child-friendly/safe?
- Is rest time based on the needs of each child (infants sleep on their own schedule, quiet activities for children who don't nap)?
- Are there plenty of books for children?
- Are books available to children in their own languages and for different ages?
- Is there circle time, storytelling or reading?
- Are families' cultures respected in activities and celebrations?

How are parents included?

- Am I encouraged to spend time as a guest for lunch or as a volunteer?
- How will I hear about my child's day?
- Do I feel respected as my child's first and most important teacher?

Will my child be safe and healthy here?

- Are there enough staff members to give attention to all the children?
- Are toys and equipment safe and age-appropriate?
- Are staff trained in CPR and first aid?
- Is the licensed space child-proofed (cleaning supplies up high, electrical outlets covered, medicines locked up)?
- Do children and staff wash hands often (before eating and after using the toilet, blowing noses, diaper changing, playing outside)?
- Are there regular fire drills?
- Does the outdoor play area seem safe?
- Are there locks on the door to keep strangers out and children in?
- If my child goes to school, is there a plan for getting him/her to and from school safely?
- Are there rules for when a child becomes ill?
- How often are diapers changed?
- Is there an emergency plan for contacting families?

What will my child eat, and when?

- What are the rules about food brought from home?
- Does this place offer healthy meals and snacks?
- Are children's choices, appetites, allergies and religious or cultural restrictions respected?

Do I agree with the discipline policy?

- Do staff set limits that are reasonable, clear, consistent and age-appropriate?
- Do staff use calm voices and redirect children to other activities if there's a problem?
- What happens when children hit, bite or bully?

How are staff supported?

- Do staff get training and continuing education?
- Do staff have break times?
- Do staff get time to plan activities?

Will my child thrive here?

- Are different cultures, ethnicities and abilities valued?
- Do staff smile at, talk and play with, and listen to children?
- Does this place encourage creativity and age-appropriate independence?
- Do staff hold and cuddle with infants and toddlers often, including while feeding?
- Will the same people take care of my child regularly?
- Are children comforted when needed?
- Is this setting bright, pleasant and happy?
- Will my child have FUN here?

