



Choosing Child Care

Research tells us that our children's healthy development depends on safe and positive experience during the first few years of life. If you are a parent who works during these early years, choosing good child care is one of the most important decisions you will ever make for your child.

Consider these guidelines when choosing a place where you are comfortable leaving your child:

Supervision

- Are children supervised at all times, even when they are sleeping?
- How do the caregivers discipline the children?

Handwashing and Diapering

- Do all caregivers and children wash their hands often, especially before eating and after using the bathroom or changing diapers?
- Is the place where diapers are changed clean?
- Do caregivers always keep a hand on the child while diapering?
- Do caregivers remove the soiled diaper without dirtying any surface not already in contact with stool or urine?
- Do caregivers clean and sanitize the surface after finishing the changing process?



Director Qualifications

- Does the director of a child care center have a bachelor's degree in a child-related field?
- Has the director worked in child care for at least two years?
- Does the director understand what children need to grow and learn?

Lead Teacher Qualifications

- Does the lead teacher in a child care center have a bachelor's degree in a child-related field?
- Has the teacher worked in child care for at least one year?
- Does the teacher give children lessons and toys that are right for their ages?

Child:Staff Ratio and Group Size

- How many children are being cared for in the child care program?
- How many caregivers are there?

Immunizations

- Is your child up-to-date on all of the required immunizations?
- Does the child care program have records proving that the other children in care are up-to-date on all their required immunizations?

Toxic Substances

- Are toxic substances like cleaning supplies and pest killers kept away from children?
- Has the building been checked for dangerous substances like radon, lead and asbestos?
- Is poison control information posted?

Emergency Plan

- Does the child care program have an emergency plan if a child is injured, sick, or lost?
- Does the child care program have first-aid kits?
- Does the child care program have information about who to contact in an emergency?

Fire/Emergency Drills

- Does the child care program have a plan in case of a disaster like a fire, tornado, flood, blizzard, or earthquake?
- Does the child care program do practice drills once every month?

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Staff Training/First Aid

- Have caregivers been trained how to keep children healthy and safe from injury and illness?
- Do they know how to do first aid and rescue breathing?
- Have they been trained to understand and meet the needs of children of different ages?
- Are all child care staff, volunteers, and substitutes trained on and implementing infant back sleeping and safe sleep policies to reduce the risk of SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome)?

Child Abuse

- Can caregivers be seen by others at all times, so a child is never alone with one caregiver?
- Have all caregivers undergone background checks?
- Have the caregivers been trained on how to prevent child abuse, how to recognize signs of child abuse, and how to report suspected child abuse?

Medications

- Does the child care program keep medication out of reach from children?
- Are the caregivers trained and the medications labeled to make sure the right child gets the right amount of the right medication at the right time?

Playgrounds

- Is the playground regularly inspected for safety?
- Is the playground surrounded by a fence?
- If there is a sandbox, is it clean?
- Are the soil and playground surfaces checked often for dangerous substances and hazards?
- Is equipment the right size and type for the age of children who use it?

Source: "Choosing Child Care," www.childcareaware.org.

help me



If you have concerns about your child's growth and development, please talk to your child's health care provider or call 1-866-693-GROW (4769), to talk to a professional and find out how you can get connected with various resources in Minnesota.



Tools to Help Families Find High-Quality Child Care and Early Education Programs

