

QUALITY CHILD CARE CHECKLIST - INFANTS & TODDLERS



A good caregiver is...

Loving and Responsive

One who hugs, rocks, cuddles, seeks eye contact and enjoys the child... who responds to the baby's smiles and emerging skills and interests... who finds ways to expand upon children's play to help them learn new skills... who is sociable and interested in children. One who talks with the baby about what they do and see... who supports children in building relationships with other children and adults.

Respects the baby's individuality

One who understands and nurtures babies' development... who recognizes the baby's personal rhythms, style, strengths and limitations... and tunes into these when planning the pace and time for eating, sleeping and playing. One who is comfortable accommodating to children's special needs or conditions.

Provides a stimulating and child-friendly environment

An area that is clean and safe so babies can explore their surroundings... filled with interesting and stimulating things to explore... set up to promote learning through free play... changed regularly to accommodate the needs of growing infants and toddlers... organized to have distinct eating and diapering areas and set up to be comfortable and practical for adults, allowing them to focus on the children.

What to Look for in a Child Care Program:

Because the way children are treated by caregiving adults shapes their development in important ways, it is crucial to find a child care professional who both understands and nurtures children's learning through the everyday moments they share. For example, does the caregiver talk to your baby during a diaper change, comfort or sing to her if she is protesting? Responding to children, even when they are too young to understand the meaning of our words, lets them know that their feelings and experiences are important and respected.

If at all possible, observe caregivers interacting with children during the day. Parents can learn a lot about a program simply by watching. Here are some specific criteria to look for and ask about when visiting a child care program:

- What training do staff members have in infant-toddler development?
- Do caregivers speak to the children, even babies? Do they sing and read to the children?
- Do they answer children's questions patiently? Do they ask children questions?
- Is each baby allowed to eat and sleep according to their own rhythms, and not based on a schedule imposed by the caregiver?
- For toddlers, is a daily schedule posted, using visuals, so that children can anticipate what will happen next?
- Are toys and materials well organized so that children can choose what interests them?
- Are caregivers able to accommodate the special needs of children?
- Do caregivers respect the language, culture and values of families in the program?
- How does the caregiver feel about discipline? Weaning? Toilet training? Feeding? Do the caregiver's beliefs match your own?
- Does the caregiver handle conflicts without losing patience or displaying anger?
- Does the caregiver seem to enjoy children?
- Are you welcome to drop in at any time?
- Would your child feel good about coming here? Would you feel good about leaving your child here?
- Is the environment sanitary and safe?
- Is the setting appealing with comfortable lighting and an acceptable noise level?