QUALITY CHILD CARE CHECKLIST:

What to look for in a quality child care program

When visiting a program, ask these questions. Your answers to these questions should be “yes.”

FACILITY:

______ Is the provider certified by the Department of Public Welfare and is it posted?
______ Does the provider participate in Keystone STARS?
______ Are there appropriate toys and materials for children of all age groups?
______ Does the provider encourage you to drop in and visit at any time?

STAFF:

______ Does staff communicate daily with parents about their child’s progress?
______ Does staffing allow for each child to receive individual attention?
______ Does staff sit and read to the children?
______ Does staff seem patient and receptive to children’s needs?
______ Is staff respectful of children?
______ Is staff respectful of parents?
______ Does staff encourage children’s sharing, manners and other good behaviors?
______ Does staff appear lively, smiling and interacting in a positive manner with the children?
______ Does staff involve children in daily learning activities?

SAFETY:

______ Does the facility appear orderly and clean?
______ Are hazardous materials locked away?
______ Is there an emergency plan and is it posted?
______ Are there security measures in place?
______ Is there a policy for sick children and other circumstances?

CHILDREN:

______ Do the children have a consistent routine that they can understand and follow?
______ Do the children seem occupied and engaged?
______ Are the children involved in activities that promote learning?
______ Is there a policy on discipline?
______ Do the children seem happy?

FEELINGS:

______ Is your initial reaction upon entering the site a positive one?
______ Is this a place my child would enjoy?
______ Would my child be safe here?
______ Would I/we feel comfortable using this program?
______ Would my child learn new things every day at this program?
Four Steps to Selecting a Child Care Provider

ONE Interview Caregivers:

CALL FIRST

Ask:
• Is there an opening for my child?
• What hours and days are you open and where are you located?
• How much does care cost? Is financial assistance available?
• How many children are in your care? What age groups do you serve?
• Do you provide transportation?
• Do you provide meals (breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks)?
• Do you have a certificate of compliance?
• Other accreditations?
• Do you participate in Keystone STARS?
• When can I come to visit?

VISIT NEXT

Look for:
• Responsive, nurturing, warm interactions between caregiver and children.
• Children who are happily involved in daily activities and comfortable with their caregiver.
• A clean, safe and healthy indoor and outdoor environment, especially napping, eating and toileting areas.
• A variety of toys and learning materials, such as books, puzzles, blocks and climbing equipment, that your child will find interesting and that will contribute to your child’s growth and development.
• Children getting individual attention.

Ask:
• Can I visit anytime?
• How do you handle discipline?
• What do you do if a child is sick?
• What would you do in case of emergency?
• Do you have a substitute or back-up caregiver?
• Where do children nap? How do you ensure that babies sleep on their backs?

TWO Check References

ASK OTHER PARENTS:
• Did your child learn new things while enrolled in the program?
• How did the caregiver discipline your child?
• Did your child enjoy the child care experience?
• How did the caregiver respond to you as a parent?
• Do you feel that this program has helped prepare your child for school?
• Would you recommend the caregiver without reservation?
• If your child is no longer with the caregiver, why did you leave?

Ask the Local Child Care Information Services, CCIS, Agency or Certification Office:
• What regulations should child care providers meet in my area?
• Is there a record of complaints about the child care provider I am considering and how do I find out about it?

THREE Make the Decision for Quality Care

FROM WHAT YOU HEARD AND SAW, ASK YOURSELF:
• Which child care should I choose so that my child will be happy and grow?
• Which caregiver can meet any special accommodations for my child?
• Are the caregiver’s values compatible with my family’s values?

Call 1-877-4PA-KIDS or your local Child Care Information Services for more information.

FOUR Stay Involved

ASK YOURSELF:
How can I arrange my schedule so I could...
• Talk to my caregiver every day?
• Talk to my child every day about how the day went?
• Visit and observe my child in care at different times of the day?
• Be involved in my child’s activities?
How can I work with my caregiver to resolve issues and concerns that may arise?
How do I keep informed about my child’s growth and development while in care?
How can I promote good working conditions for my child care provider?
How can I network with other parents?

• What education have you (and other staff) had? What ongoing professional development is available?
• May I see a copy of your state certificate of compliance?
• May I see a copy of additional accreditations?
• May I have a list of parents (current and former) who have used your program?
• What kind of parent involvement do you have?

• Is the child care available and affordable according to my family’s needs and resources?
• Do I feel good about my decision?