

Checklist for Quality Summer Child Care

- √ Start early!! It is never too early to be thinking about summer for your child. The earlier you begin, the more options will be available to you.
- √ Make sure all community agencies available to you and your child are being utilized (See attached list of community agencies that can provide support with child care programs). If you do not know if your child may be eligible for these services, call early to begin the process, so that eligibility will be complete prior to summer beginning.
- √ Begin by thinking what is important to you in a child care placement. Consider your child's interests, strengths, and needs. Write a list. This will help you focus on what your priorities will be in choosing a provider.
 - Indoors vs. Outdoors
 - Center-Based vs. In-Home
 - Special Interests (Sports, Arts, etc.)
 - Routine/Consistency provided (many field trips vs. few field trips)
 - Staff Present (consistency, turnover)
- √ Know what the logistics are
 - Days/Times (make sure to consider your child's Extended School Year schedule, if this applies)
 - Location (near home/work/on bus line)
 - Price (how much can you afford, if financial aid is needed)
 - When you need care to begin
 - If care is needed for multiple children
- √ Locate Provider Options
 - Call 4C's (271-9181) or Satellite (275-6740), both of which can provide you a list of providers in the area you choose.
 - Call your child's school (oftentimes schools will have a list of area child care providers on hand)
 - Talk to people you know and trust for child care program recommendations.
 - Use the "Summer Planner" that comes out in early March in the Wisconsin State Journal.
 - Refer to the "Summer Options" included in your packet.
 - Look in the phone book.
- √ Develop a list of questions to use when calling potential providers (see attached sample questions). A few other things to keep in mind:
 - Transportation Details (if accessible busing will be needed for field trips, if busing will be needed to from ESY (if applicable), etc.)

- Special Diet/Feeding Details (g-tube, food allergies/preferences, casein/gluten free diet, etc.)
- √ Call the potential child care providers. Remember the provider will be caring for your child. Interview them using your list of questions in order to determine if they would be a good match for your child.
- √ Follow your gut feeling. If you enjoy talking to them and they are willing and able to answer your questions to your satisfaction (as well as meet your family's needs), ask to set up a time to observe the program and/or meet with the staff. (Due to the nature of many summer programs, they may not be running during the school year. You may still, though, be able to observe the program's after-school site which will give you a feel for the program dynamics, meet some of the summer staff, and/or visit the program site.)
- √ During your observation/meeting:
- Watch how the provider interacts with the children.
 - Observe the environment. Will it be conducive to your child's needs? (For example, if your child needs space boundaries, are they available, and if not, could they be added easily?)
 - What is the general attitude of the program and staff? Is it welcoming and positive?
 - Ask any additional questions that may arise
 - Be ready to talk about your child, as well
- √ Go home and think about it. If there are things you are unsure of, is it a deal breaker? Are you still happy with the provider's answers the following day? Talk to friends and family to get their feedback.
- √ Once you have decided on a program, fill out any necessary paperwork to enroll your child.
- √ For many children with disabilities (and those without, as well) starting a new child care program can be scary. If possible, it may benefit your child to set up a visit time or two prior to the summer program starting, so that they are able to feel more comfortable attending with the space and staff. Talk with your child about the program and answer any questions or uneasiness they may have. Foreshadow with them when they will start the new program in a positive way. (Having pictures, social stories, a calendar showing the start of summer, and other tools can be helpful for your child in easing this transition.)
- √ Provide child care staff with any useful information on your child prior to the program starting. This will help the staff feel more comfortable and able to meet your child's needs, which will help you feel more comfortable, as well.

- √ Be present throughout the summer (especially at the beginning). If you are nervous or the child care provider has questions (and you are able), offer to be present and show the staff how to work with your child the first day or two. (This can also happen prior to summer starting.) Be conscious, though, that you also allow your child and the staff the opportunity to work through issues and develop a relationship without your presence.
- √ Be available by phone in case the program has questions or concerns that arise (as they no doubt will), especially when your child first begins attending.
- √ Open Communication is key to a successful summer!! Develop a communication system that works well for both you and the program. Plan on spending a little extra time when dropping off and picking up your child to talk with the staff. Share information about how the morning went and ask questions about what your child did during the day. Many parents provide a communication notebook to write notes back and forth between home and child care program. This works well to document what is happening during your child's day as well as to let the staff know any details of what is happening at home that might affect the child at his/her program.
- √ Trust the staff. They work with children who have a variety of abilities and disabilities every day. They can do this! Encourage and praise them.
- √ Be aware of special events, field trips, etc. If your child may need any accommodations (accessible busing, special equipment, social story, grouping with specific peer, etc.) make sure program staff are aware of this prior. Inform staff of any additional tips to make the event a success.