

# Steps to Finding Quality Child Care

Quality child care is a high priority for any parent who intends on having their child in someone else's care. It can be an emotional and difficult process, especially for parents of children with disabilities. However, using the following guidelines on finding quality child care should help streamline the process and give you confidence that you are making a good choice that meets your family's needs and is in the best interest of your child.

1. Start by thinking about 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.
2. Know what the logistics are. For example, you need care Monday- Friday from 7a-4:30p near your home. How much can you afford? Is it on a bus-line? When do you need care to begin? Is this for more than one child?
3. Consider what type of environment you prefer. This will likely match with what you are looking for in a provider. In other words, are you more interested in a Family Child Care environment or will a Center-based environment more closely meet your family's needs.
4. Call 4Cs (271-9181) or Satellite (275-6740), both can provide you with a list of providers in the area you choose.
5. Look through the list and eliminate providers based on location, hours they are available, not enough experience, etc.
6. Call ALL of the remaining providers on your list. Even if you think you found the right person after a couple of calls, keep looking. You may not be as impressed later in the process.
7. Remember, the provider will be working for you. Interview them as if you were hiring them for any other job, none of which are as important as caring for your child in your absence. (See interview questions for specific ideas on what to ask.)
8. Follow your gut feeling. If you like talking to them and they can meet your family's needs, ask to set up a time to observe the program and ask more questions. Most likely, they will ask you to come toward the end of the day after most children have left. Consider showing up early so you can watch how the provider interacts with the children.
9. Do a second interview! Ask questions until you are satisfied! Write down the answers. Be ready to talk about your child. A provider may be able to make accommodations based on the information you gave or they may have a valid reason for not being able to meet the needs of your child.
10. 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 potential provider's answers the next day? Talk to friends and family to get their feedback.
11. Call the provider and let them know if you would like to reserve a spot or ask any new questions that have come up.

Phone Interview Questions:

1. Do you have any openings for a \_\_\_\_\_ old beginning in \_\_\_\_\_?
2. What are your hours (including days you are open)?
3. What is your philosophy on child care? OR What do you think children need to succeed?
4. How does your program support your philosophy?
5. What does your daily schedule typically look like?
6. Who are you licensed or certified by? Do you have any accreditations?
7. What is your experience and education?
8. How many children do you have in care? What are their ages?
9. How is your facility set-up?
  - a. Indoors
  - b. Outdoors
10. You do not need to offer any information about your child, but you can if you choose to. Our child currently uses sign as his primary form of communication. Are you willing to learn his current signs and continue to work on this form of communication? OR Our child uses a wheelchair..... OR Our child has some sensory needs.... ETC
11. You do not need to offer any information about your child, but you can if you choose to. We use cloth diapers. Are you open to using them while he is in your care? OR Our child only eats pureed food.... OR Our child is still in diapers..... ETC
12. How do you discipline an infant? A toddler? A preschooler?
13. Where are you located?
14. What is the fee and what does it include?
15. Does the fee change for additional children?

## In-Person Interview

The following is a list of things you should ask your provider about. Most providers will have a contract that will cover most of these areas. Ask them to tell you about them, but ask for a copy to take with you.

1. Sick kid policy
2. Paying for days child is absent for illness, appointment, or vacation
3. Discipline policy for toddlers/ preschoolers
4. Meals and snacks
5. Overall child care philosophy
6. Security, safety, emergency policies
7. Unannounced visits
8. Hours
9. Costs
10. Potty training
11. Daily schedule
12. Location
13. Holiday or other closures
14. What do you supply
15. Amount of time spent reading, music, activities, watching TV
16. other children in care (approximate ages)
17. certified, licensed, accredited
18. provider education
19. set-up of facility
20. fieldtrips
21. transportation
22. inclusion
23. any other concerns or questions you have specific to your child