



Children's Health

Selecting a Child Care Provider

HOW TO GO ABOUT IT

The first step in identifying who your child care provider will be is deciding what your needs are. Different children need different care. Infants need constant attention, while toddlers need a safe place to explore and express their growing independence. Preschool-age children need supervision and help establishing friendships and learning to play well together. School-age children need a setting where they will not feel alone.

TYPES OF DAY CARE

PRIVATE HOME CARE

When the day care provider works out of her home, you are assured a home environment, close playmates and more flexible hours. The costs can vary, and if the caregiver is sick or on vacation, you will be responsible for finding an alternative.

CHILD CARE CENTERS

This is the most common type of child care outside the home. Make sure the child care center is properly licensed, has an adequate staff, provides age-appropriate activities and has a low caregiver-to-child ratio. Costs are spread out among a larger group so the per-family costs are kept down. Social skills and cooperation are learned in this larger setting, but individual attention may be lacking, and the chances of disease spreading may increase.

IN-HOME CARE

Nannies, au pairs or housekeeper/caregivers come into your home to care for your child. A nanny is hired just to care for children, not to do housework. They can live with you, and they often have a lot of practical experience or professional training. Au pairs are most often young women and men who do light housekeeping chores and child care in exchange for room and board. College or university students and foreigners are often interested in this type of work. However, for foreigners, proper visas and work permits are important.

CO-OP OR ALTERNATIVE CARE

Some families find that sharing a caregiver, who rotates between two or more family homes, costs less and provides a comfortable level of care for their children. Care is more personalized, and the parents can design hours, days and locations themselves.

Use these questions to help you choose the best type of child care for your child.

	YES	NO
Does the center or home have a license and meet state regulations?		
Is there a sufficient number of adult caregivers present at all times? This means one adult per three to four infants; one adult per four to five toddlers and one adult per six to nine preschoolers.		
Is the center childproofed (covered outlets, no sharp corners and dangerous items out of reach)?		
Are sanitary procedures in place? Do staff and children wash their hands regularly? Is equipment cleaned regularly?		
Is the staff friendly and helpful?		
Are parents allowed and encouraged to stop by unannounced?		
Is the discipline program one you agree with and are comfortable with?		
Does the caregiver communicate openly with you?		
Is there an adequate play area both indoors and outdoors?		
Are activities and rest periods scheduled?		
Can this caregiver provide personal attention for your child?		