

Selecting a Child-Care Facility

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Consumer Series | Family

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Today more than ever, children spend a large number of their waking hours with adults other than their parents. A growing concern facing working parents is how to select the child care arrangement that meets their needs and the needs of the child, and corresponds to their value system.

Child care choices are based on many factors: cost, convenience, quality and benefits to the child. The primary options for child care are in-home, day care homes and day care centers.

Start looking as far in advance as you can. Whether you are considering a child care center or care in someone else's home, finding the right child care option can take time.

Making child care arrangements is often time consuming and many centers and home have waiting lists. It is a good idea to make child care arrangements three to six months in advance. Give yourself enough time to explore available options and weigh their advantages and disadvantages. Unfortunate errors can result from quick decisions with little investigation.

One of the most important considerations is to select a licensed, day care home or child care center. Question potential providers about their license (if one is not posted), activities for children, daily schedule, menu selections, disciplinary practices, frequency of household visitors, nature of visits, personal habits (i.e. smoking, drinking), and drivers who transport children. In addition, ask how

many children there are for each adult. The fewer the children for each adult, the better for your child. Babies need an adult-to-child ratio of no more than 1:4 (one adult for four infants), while 4 year olds can do well with a ratio of 1:10 (one adult for 10 children).

Observe facilities for health and safety concerns that are important to you. Talk to present and past customers (parents). Find out if they are, or were, satisfied.

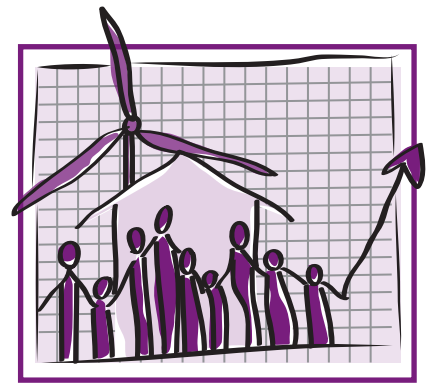
The time spent searching for and choosing arrangements will pay off in peace of mind to be experienced later. Regardless of the child care you decide on, remember to make sure the caregiver loves and enjoys children and understands how they learn and grow.

Make a Call

Begin your search by calling your local experts - your child care resource and referral (CCR&R) center. CCR&R's can give you the facts about child care, and a list of child care options in your area that may meet your needs.

Some questions to ask include:

- What are licensing requirements in my area?
- How can I get information about complaints and licensing violations?
- Are there any child care financial assistance programs that my family qualifies for?



Quick Facts

- Know available options in your area.
- Determine your needs: hours, days, transportation, location to work and home, cost, special attention, and type of care desired.
- Begin the search for possible care options through friends, other parents, licensing agency, doctors' offices, resource and referral agencies, social services offices, newspapers, and community groups.
- Inquire about facility licensing.
- After selecting the child care arrangement of your choice, make periodic random visits to see if your child's needs are met.

See table
on back side.



Type of Care	Advantages	Disadvantages
<i>In-Home Care</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child remains in familiar environment Child receives individual attention Provider available if child is ill Reduced exposure to illness Hours can match needs Child does not have to be transported Convenient for parents and child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expensive Child can be deprived of peer socialization May have no substitute if provider is ill Provider may leave with short notice Parents are responsible for background checks Provider may have no training in child development May be required to pay social security and medicare taxes and federal unemployment taxes for the employee
<i>Licensed Child Care</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Usually less expensive than in-home Usually more flexible hours than centers Smaller group of children than centers Usually one constant caregiver More places to choose Some day-care homes offer developmentally-appropriate educational activities May take infants and toddlers along with older siblings Not subject to paying social security, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality varies greatly Operating times/days may change Home may be open to visitors while children are on premises Illness or vacation may cause shutdown Children may not have playmates of same age May not take sick children
<i>Center-Based</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developmentally-appropriate educational programs Age-appropriate games, toys and other equipment Providers often trained in child development More staff ensures greater dependability Centers regulated and inspected to meet health and safety standards Special services and events may be offered Child will have same age peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hours/days may not match parents' needs May not care for mildly ill children May not take infants and toddlers May require toilet training before admittance Usually more costly than family day care