

Plan For Finding High Quality Child Care

1. Call Child Care Solutions

- Call Child Care Solution's Parent Services Specialists for a list of programs that meet your needs.
- Be specific when you call. For example if your child has a pet allergy make sure we know.
- Discuss any questions or concerns you have with our team.

2. Call The Potential Program

- Ask if they have openings (state child's or children's age/ages).
- Ask questions on topics that are important to you (Use information from this referral packet as a guide).
- Arrange for an interview appointment with providers who may meet your needs.
- Arrange a time to visit during the day while children are in care.

3. Prepare Interview Questions To Ask

- Is the caregiver/program licensed or registered?
- How much experience and training does the caregiver/staff have?
- Is there frequent staff change and/or turnover?
- Is there a parent contract? What are the details of the contract?
- What is the expectation of payment for holidays, vacation and sick days (yours & theirs)?
- How does the program keep parents informed about their child's/children's day?
- Are there parent involvement opportunities (Such as field trips or special projects)?

4. Visit, Observe, And Interview

- Visit the program and interview either the child care center director or family caregiver. Bring our checklist (pgs. 10-11) of things to look for.
- Observe the interactions between children & caregivers.
- Observe the caregiver's/classroom routine while also observing the room.
- Take note of the area. Are the children well supervised? Are there enough toys? Are the toys age appropriate?
- Look for room safety. Are the outlets covered? Cabinets childproof?
- Obtain a copy of the provider's/program's contract and ask for references before you leave (perhaps current families and at least one family who no longer uses this program).

5. After The Visit

- Check references
- Read through the contract
- Contact the Office of Children & Family Services/Child Care Solutions & check the program's compliance history
- After you have narrowed down or chosen a program; you may want to bring your child in for a test run. Observe their interactions with the caregiver and other children.



7 Indicators of High Quality Child Care

1. Small Group Size & Low Caregiver to Child Ratios

Small group size and low teacher/child ratios are probably the best indicators for determining the quality of a child care program. Regulated programs must limit the number of children each adult cares for based on the standards set. These standards help to ensure children are properly supervised, safer and get the attention they need and deserve. Although safety is always forefront on every parents mind there are other benefits to small group size and low caregiver/child ratios. Caregivers in small groups spend more time interacting (responding, comforting, talking, listening, playing, reading etc.) with children. They are also more sensitive to children's needs, more actively involved in their care and tend to offer more developmentally appropriate activities. Research shows that children in small groups are not only safer, they also have better social skills, are more involved in activities, and less aggressive. One of the bigger benefits of small group size and low ratios is that caregivers and children have more opportunity to talk to each other. This increased communication is critical to developing children's language skills and school readiness.

2. Strong Parent/Provider Relationships

Quality child care programs respect and understand the importance of their relationships with parents. You should feel welcome at all times and be invited to participate in activities, field trips and special programs. You have the right to drop in at any time during business hours to observe or visit. There should be open communication with the caregiver on a regular (if not daily) basis. Parents should always feel comfortable when talking to their child care provider.

3. Consistent Relationships

Change is hard for most people. It can be especially difficult for young children. Getting used to new caregivers takes time and can be very stressful. That is why it is best if children stay with the same caregiver for at least one year. Quality programs are able to keep staff turnover to a minimum and have consistent relationships with children.

4. Caregivers Have Early Childhood Training

In your absence child care providers act as your child's protector and teacher. It is crucial that they are trained & educated in early childhood development. NYS regulated childcare programs/caregivers must receive ongoing training in such areas as health & safety, nutrition, child abuse & neglect and other child development areas to maintain their license/registration. We at Child Care Solutions know the importance a properly trained caregiver can make in the life of your child. We educate providers on everything from potty training, behavior, guidance, early literacy & learning through play. Quality programs make training like this a priority.

5. Program is Licensed or Registered

Legal child care programs have a license or are registered, with only a few exceptions. Programs that care for more than two non-related children for three hours or more per day must have a license or registration certificate. Staff of licensed and registered programs have background checks and are required to meet continuing education requirements. These programs are inspected to insure that they meet New York State's high health & safety standards. Pre-K programs meet NYS Department of Education standards. Summer camps may meet either Department of Health or NYS Office of Children & Family Services standards. When you visit a regulated child care program, ask to see the license or registration certificate.

6. Good Health & Safety Practices

Attention to basic health and safety factors is critical to high quality child care. NYS regulations require that all licensed and registered providers meet basic health & safety standards. Some things you should ask about include:

- Are the children seen and heard by the caregiver at all times? Even during nap time?
- Are feeding and sleeping schedules and/or toilet training addressed?
- Are nutritious meals provided? (Caregivers are allowed to have parents bring meals.)
- Does the site have a bathroom, wash area that is accessible to children? Does the program follow good hand washing and sanitation practices?
- Are there enough adults for the group size and ages of the children?
- Is the furniture and equipment clean, safe and in good condition?
- Is the site child-proofed: electrical outlets covered, stairways protected, childproof locks on cabinets, poisons kept away from children, hanging cords from blinds secured?
- Does the site have working fire & CO2 detectors and fire extinguishers?
- Is there an emergency/evacuation plan and are practice drills done with the children?
- Is there a working phone at the site? Are emergency numbers posted?
- Are caregivers MAT certified? (MAT certification or Medication Administration Training is required if your child needs to have certain medication on a regular basis for routine medical needs while in care.)

7. Accreditation

Accreditation is a system of recognition for child care programs/caregivers that meet very high quality standards. Accreditation is granted by national commissions such as NAEYC or NAFCC. Programs & caregivers that are accredited have met voluntary standards for child care that are higher than most state requirements. Accreditation is granted for a 5 year period. There are a limited number of accredited programs in Onondaga & Cayuga Counties.