

Choosing child care

The quality of care your child receives affects his/her mental, emotional, and physical growth and development. Parents who pay careful attention to choosing quality child care can provide an ideal environment for their children during the day – an environment presenting challenging educational opportunities and allowing children to play creatively and socialize with each other. Finding quality child care arrangements can sometimes seem like a monumental task, but it is not impossible. The recommendations of family, friends and neighbors are excellent sources of information about the child care providers in your area. Lists of licensed child care providers also may be available from child care licensed offices, local schools and community resource centers.

*To help parents in their search for quality child care, the Kansas Department for Children and Families, the Department of Health and Environment and the Cooperative Extension Services at Kansas State University have cooperatively developed several brochures en-titled, *Choosing Care for Your Children*. Information in the column to the right has been excerpted from these brochures to assist you in choosing the right child care provider for your child.*

Always visit a prospective child care provider before making a decision. Some important considerations are:

- The relationship between the caregiver and the other children.
- The type of activities offered. Does the daily schedule include activities in which you want your child to be involved?
- Check the amount and cleanliness of the space and equipment available for the children.
- Ask about the discipline policy.
- What is the schedule for meals and snacks?
- Ask about the features that ensure the safety of the children.

Talk with the providers about your child's needs, what you expect from them and the services that they offer.

Ask about ...

- Their experience and training.
- How many children attend and the number of children for which each adult is responsible.
- The status of licensing or registration of the provider.
- References. Obtain names of other parents who have used the child care services. Be sure to call these parents and ask them about the care their children received.

Visit several providers or homes. BE CHOOSY! Try to visit during the times when the children are there. Some things to be aware of:

- Make sure that the child care facility allows parents to come and go without calling first and that there are no areas that are off-limits to parents.
- Make sure that there is proper supervision during naptime.
- Find out who will be interacting with your children in addition to the child care provider and staff.
- Discuss in-depth with the provider how the discipline of children is handled - how the discipline of children is handled - who administers it, under what circumstances and what form it takes.
- Are there books, puzzles, blocks and other age-appropriate toys available?
- How much of the day is the TV on?
- What are their plans if an emergency were to occur?

After your child goes to the child care center:

- Listen to your child and encourage him/her to talk about their day.
- Drop in unannounced periodically.
- Schedule conferences with the provider to talk about your child's care.
- Attend parent meetings and get involved in facility activities.