



Guides to Telephone Screening and Visiting a Child Care Center or Home

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TELEPHONE SCREENING CHECKLIST

When you call a provider, first introduce yourself and say why you are calling. Always ask whether it is a good time for the provider to talk; if not, ask when you should call back. Take notes on answers to questions – after you’ve talked to several people, it can be hard to remember who said what.

Provider’s or center’s name:	Notes	
Does the program have an opening in my child’s age group? If not, when do you expect an opening? Is there a waiting list?		
Is the program licensed? For how many children? How many children are currently in the program? What are their ages?		
What are the program hours? (If you need part-time care, ask if they provide that.) What if I am late for pick-up? Is there a fee?		
What would be the cost of care for my child’s age and schedule? Does the fee include meals, snacks, diapers, etc?		
Can I use a child care subsidy at your program? Are there other forms of financial assistance?		
Does your program operate year-round? Are there vacation weeks, holidays, or other times when the program will be closed?		
Where are you located? Is a BART or bus stop nearby?		
Are there any transportation arrangements? If transportation is provided, what does it cost?		
If your child has special needs , ask about the provider’s experience or training. (see 4Cs Tips on finding child care for a child with special needs)		
What are the ages of the children my child would be with?		
What is the daily program for the children: goals of the program, schedule, indoor and outdoor activities?		
How many teachers and assistants are in your program? What are their qualifications? What languages do staff members speak? How long have teachers been on staff? (For family child care providers: How long have you been providing care?)		
What is the policy for sick children?		
What is the ratio of staff to children?		
Do you have any written materials you can send me?		

VISTING A CHILD CARE CENTER OR FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME

OBSERVE	
Caregivers' interactions with children	
Do you like what you see?	
Do adults and children seem to enjoy being together?	
Do adults really listen to children?	
How do adults respond when children seem unhappy?	
How do adults respond to children's conflicts?	
Are there enough adults to provide attentive care to the number of children?	
The overall atmosphere	
Is it bright and cheerful without being overwhelming?	
Do the children seem happy and involved with activities and with other children?	
The indoor space	
Is it safe, clean, and easy for children to move around in?	
Are there enough safe and interesting toys and books that all the children can reach?	
Are there spaces for children to play in small groups or be by themselves?	
Are children choosing their own activities?	
Are caregivers actively making sure children with disabilities are included in activities and play with other children?	
The outdoor space	
Is it safe and fenced-in?	
Are there enough safe toys and equipment?	

ASK YOURSELF	
Would my child be happy here?	

ASK the caregiver, teacher, director – everyone who would be responsible for your child	
What is the daily schedule of activities?	
Does it include a balance of active and quiet activities that are appropriate for the children's ages?	
Do children spend part of every day outdoors?	
How long is the TV on during a typical day?*	
When and where do children sleep?	
What foods are served for meals and snacks? Are there printed menus available for you to look at?	
How are parents involved?	
Are they invited to participate in daily activities?	
Are there other ways they can be involved?	
Are they welcome to come in any time?	
How do teachers and parents share information about the child's day?	
What is the program's philosophy?	
What discipline methods are used?	
Mention a specific situation, like biting or hitting, and ask how they would handle it	

ASK THE DIRECTOR/PROVIDER	
What education and experience do the teachers have? How long have they been working here? (For family child care: What is your education and experience? How long have you been providing child care?)	
Is the program licensed by the state? Accredited or working toward accreditation?	
What is your sick child policy?	
Do you have a disaster plan?	

**LET THE PROVIDER KNOW ABOUT
YOUR CHILD, YOUR FAMILY, YOUR
GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS**

* The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends no TV for children under 2 and limited TV for all young children.