Child Care Checklist
How to evaluate child care settings

Research has identified a few specific items that may help you to detect the level of quality in the child care facilities that you interview for your child’s care. Use this checklist as a guide to help you through this important decision making process.

HEALTH & SAFETY

- Proper equipment will reduce safety or health risks
  - Playground equipment is in good condition.
  - Sufficient sand, woodchips or other approved padded material are underneath playground equipment.
  - The playground is fenced to at least 4 feet high.
  - The playground is checked daily for dangerous objects.
  - Indoor toys and equipment are in good condition.
  - Safety gates are in place if necessary.
  - Electrical outlets are covered with safety caps.
  - First aid kits are easily accessible by adults.
  - Working smoke detectors are in every room of the facility.
  - Radiators or heaters are covered.

- Proper storage and use of medicines and cleaning supplies will reduce accidental poisoning
  - Medicines are properly labeled and out of the reach of children.
  - Adults are trained in giving medicines and are keeping records of what is given to whom.
  - Cleaning supplies and poisonous materials are locked and out of reach of children.

- Clean environments reduce illness and spread of germs
  - Adults and children wash their hands after using the bathroom.
  - Adults and children wash their hands before eating.
  - Adults wash their hands before and after diapering.
  - Diaper-changing tables are cleaned and disinfected with a bleach solution after each use.
  - There is good lighting, proper heat and cooling, and is well ventilated.
Nutritious meals and snacks improve the child’s health and well-being.

- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines are followed for preparing and serving meals and snacks.
- Food preparation safety procedures are followed.
- Meal and snack times are pleasant and relaxing.

Constant supervision in a caring environment give children a sense of safety and security.

- Children are watched at all times, even when sleeping.
- Children are greeted warmly.
- Attention is given to each individual child.
- Adults handle children’s behavior in positive ways.
- There are sufficient adults to care for the number of children in attendance. Licensing requirements for the child per adult ratio are met.
- All adults have been trained on preventing child abuse, recognizing potential signs of abuse, and know the requirements for reporting suspected abuse?

Having plans in place for injury or disaster help to prevent traumatic consequences

- Plans are in place to notify families in case of injury or disaster.
- Plans are in place to care for children in case of a child’s or an adult’s injury.
- Plans are in place in case of fire or other disaster, including flood, tornado, earthquake, intrusion, or terrorism.
- There is at least one alternate exit in case of fire.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Supervision and guidance keep children safe while learning

- Lesson plans are posted for everyone to see.
- Plans include field trips and/or interesting visitors.
- The caregiver talks, encourages conversation, describes what’s going on and reads aloud to children.
- Positive guidance techniques are used.

Children need to develop socially, emotionally, intellectually, and physically.

- The environment is arranged with specific areas for blocks, art, books, dress-up, table toys, puzzles, drawing, painting, crafts, pretend play, music, puppets and other age and developmentally appropriate activities.
Toys and materials are available and easy to access at all times.

Children are given opportunities to be creative and actively involved.

Children learn while they play.

There is an abundance of age and developmentally appropriate toys and activities available both indoors and outdoors.

There are times and places available to play quietly and to play actively.

There are times and places available to play alone and to play with others.

STAFF TRAINING

- Knowing and understand child development and how best to work with children is an important aspect of caring for children.

- The director of a Child Care Center has a college degree and at least two years of experience in the early childhood field.

- Staff at a Child Care Center have at least a CDA (Child Development Associate) and one year of experience working with children.

- A Family Child Care provider has at least a high school diploma and takes continuing education courses or in-service each year to exceed the minimum requirement for licensing.

- All staff have had specific training on child development.

- All staff have a current certification in First Aid and CPR.

- All staff have been trained on child abuse prevention and how to recognize and report suspected abuse.

- A continuing education plan is in place for each staff at the facility.

- Care that is right for each child’s age and skill levels is important for the child’s development

  - The children are treated with respect and patience.

  - All staff are relaxed and flexible.

  - All staff use a calm voice and give individual attention to each child.

  - All staff listen attentively to each child, responding with kindness and encouragement.

- Forming a bond with the provider will help children feel safe and loved.

  - Staff turnover is low so that children will feel a bond with the caregiver.

  - Staff have a sense of humor.
PARENT POLICIES

- Parent involvement is important to the child’s feeling of belonging
  - Parents or guardians of the child are encouraged to drop in at any time their child is in care
  - Written policies are given to each family
  - Families are encouraged to participate in activities

- Parent involvement is important to meet the specific needs of the child
  - Formal meetings with each family are scheduled each year
  - Informal meetings are encouraged throughout the year to review the needs of the child
  - Parents are encouraged to ask questions

PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION

- Programs have passed standards for health and safety, ratios, and equipment
  - All enrolled children have records of required shots.
  - All adults have national background checks.

- Programs that are accredited have passed national standards for providing quality care
  - The child care facility is accredited by a national organization.
  - Written personnel policies and job descriptions are available for Child Care Center staff.
  - Child Care Center staff are formally evaluated once each year.
  - Parents are surveyed annually about their satisfaction with the care of their child and services of the facility.
  - Staff are surveyed annually about their employment experiences.