



FAMILY

Selecting a Child-Care Facility

no. 10.204

by P. Johnson ¹

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.

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.

In-home care offers a care provider or nanny who comes into a home to care for the child. Parents may choose this arrangement to avoid transporting the child and maintain consistency in the child's surroundings.

Family child care is convenient, takes in a smaller number of children and costs less. Select this option if you are looking for a full- or part-day program that offers group educational activities. Child care homes and centers also provide an opportunity for social interaction.

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.

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.



Putting Knowledge to Work

© Colorado State University
Cooperative Extension. 6/98.
Reviewed 12/04.
www.ext.colostate.edu

In-Home Care

Advantages

- 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

Disadvantages

- 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

Licensed Child Care

Advantages

- 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

Disadvantages

- quality varies greatly
- operating times/days may change
- activities may not be based on knowledge of child development
- 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

Center-Based

Advantages

- 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

Disadvantages

- 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 homes