Tear Off

Is This the Right Place for My Child?

(Make a copy of this checklist to use with each program you visit.)

Place a check in the box if the program meets your expectations.	
Will my child be supervised?	
	Are children watched at all times, including when they are sleeping?[15]
	Are adults warm and welcoming? Do they pay individual attention to each child?[40]
	Are positive guidance techniques used? Do adults avoid yelling, spanking, and other negative punishments?[16]
	Are the caregiver/teacher-to-child ratios appropriate and do they follow the recommended guidelines: ▸ One caregiver per 3 or 4 infants ▸ One caregiver per 3 or 4 young toddlers ▸ One caregiver per 4 to 6 older toddlers ▸ One caregiver per 6 to 9 preschoolers[19]
Have the adults been trained to care for children?	
	If a center: ▸ Does the director have a degree and some experience in caring for children?[27/28/29] ▸ Do the teachers have a credential*** or Associate's degree and experience in caring for children?[27/28/29] **If a family child care home:** ▸ Has the provider had specific training on children's development and experience caring for children?[30]
	Is there always someone present who has current CPR and first aid training?[32]
	Are the adults continuing to receive training on caring for children?[33]
	Have the adults been trained on child abuse prevention and how to report suspected cases?[12/13]
Will my child be able to grow and learn?	
	For older children, are there specific areas for different kinds of play (books, blocks, puzzles, art, etc.)?[21]
	For infants and toddlers, are there toys that "do something" when the child plays with them?[41]
	Is the play space organized and are materials easy-to-use? Are some materials available at all times?[21]
	Are there daily or weekly activity plans available? Have the adults planned experiences for the children to enjoy? Will the activities help children learn?[22]
	Do the adults talk with the children during the day? Do they engage them in conversations? Ask questions, when appropriate?[43]
	Do the adults read to children at least twice a day or encourage them to read, if they can read?[43]
Is this a safe and healthy place for my child?	
	Do adults and children wash their hands (before eating or handling food, or after using the bathroom, changing diapers, touching body fluids or eating, etc.)?[4]
	Are diaper changing surfaces cleaned and sanitized after each use?[5]
	Do all of the children enrolled have the required immunizations?[6]
	Are medicines labeled and out of children's reach?[7]
	Are adults trained to give medicines and keep records of medications?[7]
	Are surfaces used to serve food cleaned and sanitized?
	Are the food and beverages served to children nutritious, and are they stored, prepared, and served in the right way to keep children growing and healthy?
	Are cleaning supplies and other poisonous materials locked up, out of children's reach?[8]
	Is there a plan to follow if a child is injured, sick or lost?[9]

Notes:

Place a check in the box if the program meets your expectations.	
	Are first aid kits readily available?[10]
	Is there a plan for responding to disasters (fire, flood, etc.)?[11]
	Has a satisfactory criminal history background check been conducted on each adult present? ▸ Was the check based on fingerprints?[14]
	Have all the adults who are left alone with children had background and criminal screenings?[13] **In a center:** ▸ Are two adults with each group of children most of the time? **In a home:** ▸ Are family members left alone with children only in emergencies?
	Is the outdoor play area a safe place for children to play?[39] ▸ Is it checked each morning for hazards before children use it?[23] ▸ Is the equipment the right size and type for the age of the children who use it?[24] ▸ In center-based programs, is the playground area surrounded by a fence at least 4 feet tall?[25] ▸ Is the equipment placed on mulch, sand, or rubber matting?[23] ▸ Is the equipment in good condition?[39]
	Is the number of children in each group limited? ▸ In family child care homes and centers, children are in groups of no more than** ■ 6-8 infants ■ 6-12 younger toddlers ■ 8-12 older toddlers ■ 12-20 preschoolers ■ 20-24 school-agers[20]
Is the program set up to promote quality?	
	Does the program have the highest level of licensing offered by the state?[42]
	Are there written personnel policies and job descriptions?[17]
	Are parents and staff asked to evaluate the program?[37]
	Are staff evaluated each year; do providers do a self-assessment?[18]
	Is there a written annual training plan for staff professional development?[33]
	Is the program evaluated each year by someone outside the program?[36]
	Is the program accredited by a national organization?[36]
Does the program work with parents?	
	Will I be welcome any time my child is in care?[1]
	Is parents' feedback sought and used in making program improvements?[1]
	Will I be given a copy of the program's policies?[2]
	Are annual conferences held with parents?[3]

Notes:

These questions are based on research about child care; you can read the research findings on the NACCRRA website under "Questions for Parents to Ask" at http://www.naccrra.org. Research-based indicators can only describe quality. Parents should base their decisions on actual observations.

* These are the adult-to-child ratios and group sizes recommended by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Ratios are lowered when there are one or more children who may need additional help to fully participate in a program due to a disability, or other factors.

** Group sizes are considered the maximum number of children to be in a group, regardless of the number of adult staff.

*** Individuals working in child care can earn a Child Development Associate credential.

For help finding child care in your area, contact Child Care Aware, a Program of NACCRRA at 1-800-424-2246 or www.childcareaware.org.

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