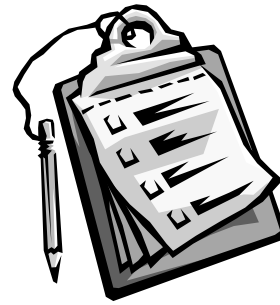


TIPS ON CHOOSING CHILD CARE



Choosing the right child care arrangement for your child is an important decision involving numerous considerations. While this handout may not answer all of your questions about choosing child care, it offers some helpful guidelines. The following tips may be helpful in your search:

- **Visit several programs:** Shop around so that you have a good sense of what your choices are and what's available.
- **Take time to thoroughly interview the person who will be caring for your child:** The caregivers are the single most important resource an early childhood program has to offer, so find out who they are. Take the time to discover their experience and background. Discuss their philosophy on child rearing. Remember that these people will be the primary caregivers for your child during the hours you are not there.
- **Find out if the program is licensed:** Call Community Care Licensing at (650) 266-8843 to find out if a provider is licensed or if he/she has had any complaints or licensing violations in the past three years. Some types of caregivers are license-exempt, such as those who come into your own home. Parents can call (800) 822-8490 between the hours of 9:00a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday to determine if the child care provider s/he is considering has registered with TrustLine. TrustLine was created by the California Legislature to offer parents, employment agencies, child care resource and referral programs, and child care providers access to a background check conducted by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). This includes a check of the California Criminal History system and Child Abuse Central Index (CACI) at the California Department of Justice (DOJ) and a check of Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) records.
- **Inspect health and safety conditions:** Is the facility clean and free of safety and health hazards? Are diapering and eating areas kept separate? Does the provider wash his/her hands and the children's hands before and after changing diapers, blowing noses, eating, going to the bathroom, etc.? Are there established illness policies? Is there a disaster plan? Are toys sanitized daily? Are children's allergies known and posted? Can the caregiver(s) maintain visual contact with all the children at one time?

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- **Consider the emotional setting:** Is your first impression one of warmth? Are the children handled gently and nurtured by the provider? Does the provider listen to and appreciate the children? Do the children seem happy, relaxed, and comfortable? Is the provider aware of the various developmental stages children go through and sensitive to the children's individual personalities?
- **Look closely at the environment:** Are the materials accessible to children? Is the space bright and pleasant? Are there opportunities for indoor and outdoor play? Are toys age-appropriate? Are things labeled with words and pictures? Is this a place a child would want to spend the day?
- **Find out about the program:** Does it provide the children with a structured yet flexible environment? Are there a variety of activities? Are transitions kept to a minimum? Is a copy of the daily schedule posted?
- **Ask the provider about the disciplinary techniques used:** Children need guidance and limits without humiliation or physical punishment. Does the provider show patience in helping children learn self-control? Are various disciplinary techniques used, and does the provider take into account the age and personality of the child(ren) involved?
- **Talk to other parents using the program:** Find out what they like and don't like, and whether they would select this program again if they were to start over. You can ask the provider for names and numbers of parents you can contact as references. Another option is to schedule your visit in the late afternoon and catch parents as they are picking up their child; find out if and when they would be willing to talk to you.

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