

Choosing Child Care

C

CONSIDER your needs. The cost, driving time, hours of operation, how often you need care.

H

HOW well trained is the staff? What is the turn-over rate? In many centers a third of the staff leaves every year. Attaching to and then having to say goodbye to a caregiver is very hard on children and some believe can affect their emotional health and feelings of security.

I

INDIVIDUALS Are children treated as individuals? Do they make choices throughout the day or does everyone do the same thing at the same time? Is there a space in which they can put their "stuff" that is for them alone (Diaper bags, back packs, blankets, pillows, special lovies)? Are there spaces in the room where a child can go to be "alone" and have some quiet and privacy?

L

LICENSED by the state? Are they meeting the state's minimum standards? You can check the reports made by the licensing rep at the center or home. What kinds of complaints have been made against the staff or facility? Was it corrected by the next visit? Is the center accredited by a national organization? The National Association for the Education of Young Children can tell you if the center has met the top standards for a place caring for children.

D

DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE? Is the staff providing developmentally appropriate activities, schedules, equipment and ratios for children that match their age and stage of development? Are things too hard or too easy; are they respectful to children needs; do they encourage the child's independence, and are the activities based on real life experiences for children? Worksheets, coloring pages and dittos are not appropriate for young children. NAEYC has resources for developmentally appropriate curriculum.

C

Is the **CENTER** organized, clean, and safe and does it feel child friendly? Are pictures down low where children can see them? Are the shelves labeled with words and pictures so children can clearly see where things go?

A

ARE there enough teachers to care for the children properly? Is there enough space for children to play and move or is it crowded? Is there enough room for cots, blankets or cribs so children can rest and nap peacefully? You can check licensing standards and NAEYC to see their recommendations for good care.

R

RELATE How does the staff relate to you and your children? Do you feel welcome? Are there ways for you to help in the classroom or at the center? Is there a parent handbook that spells out clearly your responsibilities and the center's policy? Can you visit any time? Good centers never restrict parents from seeing their children.

E

EQUIPMENT Is there enough to keep all children involved? Are there duplicates of popular toys? Is the furniture, the toys, the building and the playground in good repair? .

ADULT RESOURCES:

- *Keeping Kids Safe* by Dr Kenneth Shore
- *Touchpoint* by B.T. Brazelton
- Child Care Answers 214-631-CARE
- *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* by NAEYC
- The National Association of the Young Children (NAEYC) are local chapters www.naeyc.org