



## Choosing Good Child Care

Choosing a child care provider is one of your most important decisions. Be prepared to take a lot of time, talk to many people, and ask many questions as you search for child care. Here are some ways to be sure you make a good and healthy choice:

### TALK WITH OTHERS

- Ask family, friends and co-workers for recommendations.
- Consider different types of care—family child care provider, child care center, nursery school, etc.
- Call Locate Child Care (410-625-1111) or visit [www.mdchildcare.org](http://www.mdchildcare.org) to find out about quality child care in your area.

### VISIT THE CENTER OR HOME

- How clean are all the areas, toys and pieces of equipment that the children use?
- Are the materials and equipment appropriate to the ages of the children?
- Do the children and staff appear to be happy? Are the caregivers friendly and nurturing?
- Are there books and age-specific toys for the children to play with? Is there enough play space inside and outside? Is the playground surrounded by impact-absorbing material, like mulch?
- Are there smoke alarms throughout the areas? Are electric outlets covered? Are poison control and ambulance phone numbers clearly posted? Are there safety gates in areas for small children?

### ASK EACH PROVIDER

- Why do you do child care and what do you like about child care? How long have you (and other employees) been caring for children?
- What can you tell me about the center/your home?
- What activities do you do with the children? What is a typical day like?
- What kind of education/certificate/licensing do you or your program have? Are you/all staff trained in child development, preventing illness and injury, basic first aid, child CPR?
- How many children are there for each staff member?
- What are the ages/age groupings and group sizes in your home/center?
- Are there rules about employee hand-washing each time they diaper a child and before fixing meals or snacks?
- How would you handle various situations (crying, fighting, biting, not eating, etc.)?
- How and when do you discipline? Are there policies in writing?
- Are the younger and older children separated? (Doing this helps reduce the number of infections that are passed around.)
- What are your meal/snack times? What do you serve?
- What are your quiet/play times?
- When may I visit?

### KNOW HOW THE CENTER CARES FOR SICK CHILDREN

- Is there a “sick” room for children with minor illnesses?
- Are parents told about illnesses among the children?
- When must children stay home because of illness?
- Are children required to have vaccinations before coming to child care? A physical exam?
- For more information on the procedures and policies of a child care program, visit [www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child\\_care/child\\_care.htm](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/child_care.htm).