



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 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.