

As you think about child care...



make a visit...
ask questions...
then decide.



New York State Office of Children and Family Services
Capital View Office Park
52 Washington Street
Rensselaer, New York 12144

Choosing good child care is important. Safe and positive child care sets the stage for healthy growth and development. It takes time, patience and an understanding of what to look for when selecting child care.

Learn about different child care options and visit sites before making a decision. Call and make an appointment. Look around the child care setting carefully. Watch how the children and adults relate with one another. Ask questions. Listen. Check references.

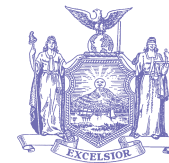
Once you have selected a child care setting and your child is in care, keep asking questions. Always check to make sure the program meets the needs of your family. It's a lot of work, but your child is worth it.

Selecting child care is an important step in the life of your child. You know the needs of your child and family. Don't settle for less. Your decision will make a big difference in your child's development, health and happiness.

Think About Child Care Checklist

To receive the checklist to help you select child care, call the New York State Parents' Connection at **1-800-345-KIDS** or visit **www.ocfs.state.ny.us**.

- *As You Think About Child Care for Your Infant and Toddler*
- *As You Think About Child Care for Your 3- to 5-Year-Old*
- *As You Think About Child Care for Your School-Age Child*



State of New York



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The Child Care Resource and Referral agency in your area is listed in the Yellow Pages under "child care."

If you have concerns about a child care provider, call the Child Care Complaint Line at **1-800-732-5207**.

To report child abuse and neglect call **1-800-342-3720**.

Learn more about the responsibilities and services available to you as an employer of an in-home caregiver by reading the Kieran's Law brochure available at **www.ocfs.state.ny.us** or **1-800-345-KIDS**.

This publication is available in Spanish
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Please call **1-800-345-KIDS**.

Pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services will make this material available in large print or on audiotape upon request.

Think About Family Needs

The cost of care, program hours and transportation are important things to consider when selecting child care. Make sure the policies and rules of the child care program are available in writing. Contact your county department of social services to see if you qualify for a subsidy to help pay for child care.

Learn more about child care options in your community by calling the local child care resource and referral agency (CCR&R). The local CCR&R is listed in the "yellow pages" under child care. To learn about the licensing history of any regulated program visit www.ocfs.state.ny.us or contact the local regional office by calling 1-800-732-5207.

Questions to ask and what to look for...

- What is the fee for child care? Are meals and snacks included in the fee? Is the fee charged when your child is not there? When is the payment due and are there any late fees? Are subsidy payments accepted? Do you qualify to claim the New York State Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit?
- Is the caregiver located near your home or office? How will you get your children to the child care program? What are the hours?
- Is the program currently licensed or registered by the state? If not, was the program licensed or registered in the past? What is the licensing history? Did you talk to other parents who use the caregiver?

A good relationship between the child, family and caregiver is important to everyone. The caregiver should have child care experience, education and/or training. The caregiver should enjoy talking to and playing with the children and communicate well with the parents.

Questions to ask and what to look for...

- Does the caregiver have experience caring for children? Does the caregiver seem to really like children, and do the children sound happy? When a child is upset, does the caregiver meet the child's needs quickly, even when the child care program is busy?
- Does the caregiver greet each child and parent as they arrive and leave each day? Does the caregiver provide a schedule of activities to the parents?
- Have mandatory criminal history background and State Central Register for Child Abuse and Maltreatment checks been completed for the caregiver(s), and everyone over the age of 18 living in the home of a family day care and group family day care?

Think About Discipline

Caregivers need to set limits for children. Those limits depend on a child's age and abilities. Children should be reminded of the limits without hitting or scaring them, hurting their feelings or taking away something important like food or rest. Corporal punishment is never allowed.

Questions to ask and what to look for...

- Does the caregiver have a written discipline policy that is given to each parent? Do parents and the caregiver talk about and agree on appropriate discipline? Has the provider set reasonable limits for the children?
- Are the children encouraged to get along with others and given gentle reminders when they do not? Does the caregiver help children talk about their feelings? Are children encouraged to use their words? Is there a lot of space, a variety of interesting things to play with and a patient caregiver who will help the children find something else to do when they get frustrated with an activity?
- Are the babies cared for with a comforting voice and gentle touch? Do the younger children have enough toys so they don't need to share? Is cooperation encouraged among the older children?

Think About Safety

Minor injuries like scrapes, cuts and bumps sometimes happen to children. It is important to know what steps your caregiver has taken to prevent accidents from happening and what plans are in place in case of an emergency.

Questions to ask and what to look for...

- How many children are being watched by each caregiver? Are the children watched at all times, including naptime?
- Is the location childproofed and are dangerous materials stored out of reach of children? Has the child care setting been checked for dangerous substances like lead, radon and asbestos? Is there fencing or another sturdy barrier around pools, ponds and other bodies of water?
- Is there a working phone? Is there a plan for medical or fire emergencies? Are medical, police, fire and poison control emergency telephone numbers posted?
- Is the fire emergency escape plan practiced with the children at least once a month? Are there at least two separate building exits in case of fire? Are there smoke detectors and fire extinguishers or a fire detection system?

Think About Health

To keep children healthy, the caregiver should encourage good health habits and take steps to prevent the spread of germs. Make sure you know the program has an approved health care plan and ask to see a copy. Child care programs must follow specific rules to give prescription and over-the-counter medicine to children.

Questions to ask and what to look for...

- Is the child care setting clean? Are toys, furniture and floors washed frequently with a bleach solution? Are staff washing their hands before handling food, before giving medication, after going to the bathroom and/or changing diapers? Are the children encouraged to wash their hands throughout the day?
- How does the caregiver's health care plan handle children who are sick, and giving medicine to children? Can the caregiver handle minor injuries? Has the caregiver taken first aid and/or CPR training?
- Does the caregiver provide healthy meals and/or snacks? Does the menu include fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, grains and milk products? Is the menu for meals and snacks given to parents in advance?

Think About Their Day

A child care setting that offers a variety of activities and experiences will help children develop skills for future school readiness. Look for a balance of active, quiet, indoor and outdoor play based on the abilities and interests of the children.

Questions to ask and what to look for...

Think About Active and Quiet Time

- Do children spend time outdoors each day? Is the indoor play space large enough for active play? Is there soft space for children who need quiet space and time? Is the space for naptime clean and large enough? Is there quiet space for doing homework?

Think About Learning, Thinking, Imagining

- Is there a variety of safe and clean books, toys and materials for the children? Are there enough of these available for the number of children? Are they culturally diverse?

Think About Talking

- Does the staff read stories, sing songs and name objects with the children everyday? Is there a variety of books, games, puzzles and magazines to help children use new words? Are television and videos used only for short periods of time and only for educational purposes?