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CHOOSING A CHILD CARE CENTER
A Consumer's Check List

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What do you look for when you consider placing your child in a child care center? This guide tells you some of the things to look for in order to make a wise decision.

The kind of treatment a young child receives in his early years and the opportunities he is given influence the kind of adult he will become. The care your child receives also influences your life. If your child attends a center where he does not receive the kind of care he needs, he will probably be cranky and hard to live with when he comes home.

Visit several centers before making a decision. You can obtain a list of them from the social services agency in your community. Visit while the children are present and spend one-half to one hour, looking and listening in the room where your child will be placed. Talk to the director and tour the center.

Get answers to these questions. The more questions answered with a "yes," the better the center probably is.

When you talk to the director, find out:

Yes ___ No ___ 1. Does the center meet all licensing requirements? Ask to see the license. Some centers do not meet all the requirements, and operate under provisional license.

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- Yes ___ No ___ 2. Is the sponsoring individual or agency one you can put your trust in? Who operates the center? Is it operated by a church or a non-profit agency? As a high school or college lab? As a profit-making business by an individual? As one of a chain of businesses?
- Yes ___ No ___ 3. Can you support the policies and objectives of the center? Ask for a copy of the center policy and read it thoroughly.
- Yes ___ No ___ 4. Is the number of children (2-5 years old) in each room limited to fifteen to twenty? Children are excessively stimulated by large numbers of other children. The younger the child, the smaller the group should be.
- Yes ___ No ___ 5. Is the adult-child ratio small enough for your child to receive the individual care and attention he needs? The younger the child, the smaller the ratio should be. One person can give adequate care to only six to eight two-year olds but can provide adequately for 15 five-year olds.
- Yes ___ No ___ 6. Are the staff members warm, friendly, and educationally qualified? Staff needs to be emotionally mature and have special preparation in child development and early childhood education. Ask what training and experience they have had. More than anything else, the quality of any program depends on its staff members -- their warmth, capability and concern.

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- Yes ___ No ___ 7. Can parents visit the center and observe in their child's class? Parents are welcomed and there is cooperation between center staff and parents.
- Yes ___ No ___ 8. Is it the policy of the school not to allow physical punishment? Teachers who understand and fulfill young children's needs and who provide adequate programs for them find it unnecessary to use physical punishment.
- Yes ___ No ___ 9. Do the disciplinary methods encourage self-discipline among the children? Children learn to share, take turns, and be cooperative by watching others. These traits develop slowly. Rigid disciplinary methods do not encourage the growth of self-discipline.
- Yes ___ No ___ 10. Does the program provide opportunities for the child to grow, develop, and learn about himself, about others, and about the world he lives in? Are the children taken on field trips? Children need more than merely custodial care. Safety and protection are important, but so is learning. Beware of centers where children sit glued to the TV for long periods of time or are required to "sit still" and "be quiet" for long periods.
- Yes ___ No ___ 11. Is the cost within your budget? Quality child care is expensive. Costs range from \$15 - \$35/per week. Rates are less for two children from one family.

When you tour the center, find out:

- Yes ___ No ___ 1. Are the surroundings bright and cheerful? Imagine that you were going to spend eight hours a day, five days a week, twelve months a year in that room. Would you find it pleasant there?

- Yes___ No___ 2. Is there plenty of space inside? Children need room to move about freely without getting into each other's hair.
- Yes___ No___ 3. Is the playground inviting? Do the children have opportunities to actively exercise their large muscles at least twice day? Children need sand to play in, devices to climb, space to run, play ball, and ride wheel toys.
- Yes___ No___ 4. Is there sufficient equipment and play materials, placed where the children can reach them? Indoor play equipment should stimulate learning, creativity, and imagination. Children need toys, books, records, puzzles, dress-up clothes, art supplies, etc.
- Yes___ No___ 5. Are the adults in your child's room warm and accepting? The adult's feelings toward the children, the way she talks to them, and the activities she plans for them can make for either a warm or a cold atmosphere. A good center is a busy, happy place where you will hear children's laughs and spontaneous chatter.

The choice of a child care center is important to you and to your child. The peace of mind you get from knowing that you have made the best possible arrangement for your child's care will more than compensate for a little extra cost or extra driving. The center which is the easiest on your pocketbook may not always be the center which is best for your child.