



Choosing a Child Care Provider

Types of Care

There are many different types of child care. Each has advantages and disadvantages.

In Home Care - The caregiver comes to your home, so your child can stay in his/her home all day. This may be a more expensive option for small families.

Family Day Care - The child goes to a caregiver's home who often cares for children from several different families. The provider must meet state regulations if caring for more than three children. It is often a more family-like atmosphere.

Center Based Care - The child goes to a day care center that typically cares for many groups of children based on age. Day care centers must be licensed by the state and have regular inspections. This option gives the child more interaction with other children in their age group.

What is Quality Care?

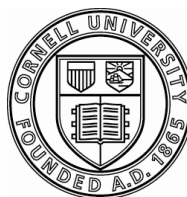
Quality care provides emotional, physical, and social development to all children. The caregivers are well trained, kind, and work with the parents and children to meet their needs.

According to the National Network for Child Care, research shows that "one of the real indicators of quality affecting children's social development is the caregiver and the verbal interactions the caregiver shares with the child."

The physical environment is safe and supportive. It allows for children to play and explore using real materials. The child to staff ratio should meet the state regulations.

Tips for Choosing a Provider

- Visit the provider twice if possible. Go once without your child, to see if you would choose this provider. Go again with your child to see the interaction between your child and the caregiver, as well as the interaction between your child and the other children.
- Make sure the provider agrees with your thoughts and feelings about feeding, crying, toilet training, discipline, television and naps.
- Remember to think of your own needs while looking for a provider. Location, cost and your personal schedule could all affect your final decision.
- Cost may be a factor in your search. Look to see if you are eligible for assistance, or if your employer offers any child care benefits.



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Questions to Ask and Things to Look For

The following is a list of questions to ask and things to look for while looking for a provider.

- Ask about the provider's background, including training, education, previous work experience, and for references
- Are they licensed?
- Give scenarios and ask how it would be handled
- Ask how many children each adult cares for
- Ask about and notice group size and ages for each group
- Find out about drop off and pick up times
- Are they open and/or available for holidays? Do you have to pay even if your child does not attend? Is there a late pick-up fee?
- What opportunities will your child have? Will your child be able to play actively?
- Are nutritious meals and snacks served? Is there a weekly menu available?
- Is the caregiver friendly and calm? Do they have respect for your family and values?
- Is there a clean, safe, and comfortable environment for your child to play in?
- Are there age appropriate activities for your child? Does the program have an educational focus? Will the provider do activities that will help your child gain skills needed for kindergarten?
- How is discipline handled?
- How will you know what is going on during the day? How will the staff communicate with you?
- How will emergencies be handled?

Resources for Choosing a Day Care Provider

- New York State Office of Children and Family Services (OFCS)
- Local Day Care/Child Care Council
- County Cooperative Extension office
- County Health Department
- Department of Social Services (1-800-345-KIDS)

Parental Information and Resource Center (PIRC)
Families and Communities Together with Schools

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