

Choosing Quality Child Care



Choosing Quality: What Do You Look for in a Center?

Choosing quality child care requires looking at facilities, listening to the classroom sounds, and asking the right questions. An onsite visit is a must. You should be able to observe the classroom at any time. Observe the children. Are they happy, engaged in age appropriate play? Listen. Are children talking to each other and the caregiver? Is the tone pleasant or filled with loud voices and crying? Is the room too quiet?

On a second visit, bring your child. See how the caregivers help the child be a part of the class.

Key indicators of quality are group size, low teacher to child ratios, teacher qualifications, and a researched based curriculum. Checklists for determining the quality of a child care program are available.

These features of quality child care include both structural elements relating to the physical environment and staffing requirements and process elements relating to curricular practices, caregiver qualities, and parental involvement.

Benefits of High Quality Child Care

The National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD) study on Early Child Care found children in higher quality care:

- Consistently showed somewhat better cognitive function and language development across the first three years of life
- Showed greater school readiness at four years of age, as reflected in standardized tests in literacy and number skills

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2014). *The NICHD Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development*. National Institutes of Health.

The effects of quality care in early childhood have been associated with higher levels of academic learning ability in future years, school readiness, better memory, better language and math skills, and fewer behavior problems. (Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center. & Educational Resources Information Center (1999).

Longitudinal studies (High Scope/ Perry Preschool Project and the Acecedarian Project) found long term benefits of high quality child care, particularly for low income children.

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS):

§130.143. Human Growth and Development (3A, 4A, B)

- *Development of children ages newborn through five years*
- *Responsibilities of caregivers for promoting the safety and development of children*

§130.247. Child Development (3B, 5C, D, E, F)

- *Ideas and information relevant to care and instruction of children in a child care setting*

§130.248. Child Guidance (1E, 2A, B, C and D, 4B, C, E)

- *Policies and responsibilities of child care centers*

§130.250. Practicum in Human Services

(1C)

- *Career paths within the human services industries*



<http://www.cte.sfasu.edu>

Choosing Quality Child Care—Suggested Activities



Researchers have identified 13 research-based guidelines to think about when choosing a child care program: Supervision, Hand washing and Diapering, Director & Lead Teacher Qualifications, Child:Staff Ratio & Group Size, Immunizations, Toxic Substances, Emergency Plan, Fire/Emergency Drills, Child Abuse (prevention), Medications, Staff Training/First Aid, Play Ground (safe).

National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care, University of Colorado Health Sciences Center at Fitzsimons.

Child Care Aware.
(2014). <http://childcareaware.org/parents-and-guardians/child-care-101/choosing-child-care>

- Obtain a copy of state licensing requirements, printed or online. Look for group size, teacher/child ratios, and educational requirements for staff.
- Locate sample checklists for child care quality provided by state licensing, universities, NAEYC or other professional sources. Look for common elements.
- Compare and contrast state licensing requirements with standards for high quality child care.
- If a field trip is not possible, interview a parent whose child is enrolled in a child care program. Interview her/him, asking questions based on a quality checklist to determine either if the parent is aware of the quality indicators or how the facility meets any of the indicators.
- Do a survey of local child care facilities; ask what curriculum they use and ask if they would

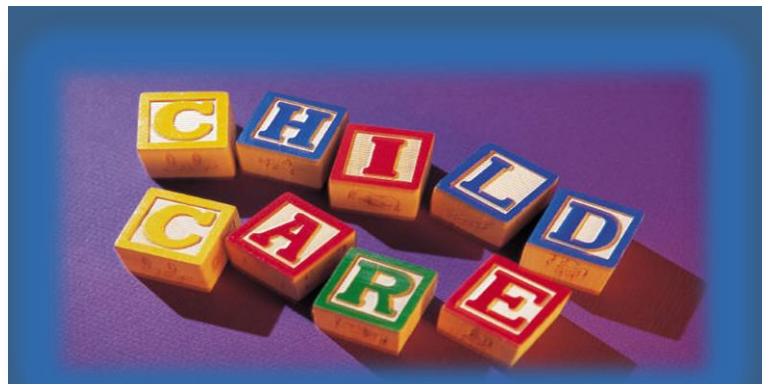
- be willing to come talk to your class about the reasons for choosing this particular curriculum.
- Interview the director of a child care program. Ask her how the program meets the quality standards.
- Have a Head Start education manager come to speak about quality requirements in the Head Start/Early Head Start program.
- Select child care programs in the area. Look up their compliance history by using the state licensing web page. Were there findings? How were they resolved?
- Interview a licensing representative charged with child care program inspections. Ask about the most common violations as well as her recommendations for selecting a child care program.
- Watch videos of best practices online or filmed at local sites. (online @ Child Care Aware site <http://childcareaware.org/parents-and-guardians/helpful-tools>)
- Arrange a field trip to a child care facility, laboratory school, or Head Start/Early Head Start site. Complete one of the checklists for quality during the visit.

Careers Related to Child Development/Resource/Referral

- √ Assistant/Associate Teacher or Aide in early childhood programs
- √ In-home care provider (nanny)
- √ Assistant/Associate Teacher or Aide working with children with special needs
- √ Early Intervention Assistant
- √ Licensed Family Child Care Provider
- √ Teacher in early childhood programs
- √ Para-educator
- √ Child Recreation Specialist
- √ Resource and Referral Specialist
- √ Program Director
- √ Child Development Specialist
- √ Family Life Specialist
- √ Parent Education Teacher
- √ Elementary Education Teacher
- √ Special Education Teacher
- √ Behavior Specialist
- √ School Psychologist
- √ College/University Professor

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. (2014). Child Care Solutions: Exploring Your Options. https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/child_care/Other_Child_Care_Information/Exploring_Options.asp

All Images Microsoft Office Clip Art (2013).
<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/images/>



According to the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral, there are 1,324,496 children in Texas under age 6 potentially needing child care. http://www.naccrra.org/sites/default/files/default_site_pages/2012/texas_060612-3.pdf

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