

Pointers For Parents

Eight Tips For Choosing Childcare

(NAPSA)—Selecting the best childcare arrangement for your child is one of the most important choices you'll make as a parent. With so many options available today, this may seem like a daunting task. How do you know which one is just right for your child, and what do you look for when evaluating childcare centers that may appear to have similar offerings?

“Every child is unique, so it's important to select a place where your child feels at home and the philosophy and approach to learning agree with your own,” said Barbara Anderson, Ph.D., vice president of education for KinderCare Learning Centers, which operates more than 1,250 early childhood education and childcare centers nationwide.

Anderson says that once a parent narrows the search to locations that are convenient and affordable, there are a number of questions parents should ask when evaluating childcare facilities.

1. Is the childcare center licensed?

2. Is it safe? Is there fire protection, plenty of light, air and clean facilities? Are there formal procedures for the arrival and departure of children?

3. Is there enough indoor and outdoor space for both quiet and active learning and play?

4. Is there a clean, properly equipped area specifically for infants and toddlers? Is there appropriate interaction and nurturing of infants and toddlers?

5. Is parent participation encouraged? Are parents welcome



and encouraged to visit and observe at any time? Are there scheduled parent conferences and developmental progress reports?

6. Does the center have strict procedures for hiring caregivers? Is the director a professional person who inspires confidence? Do teachers have experience and skills in childcare methods? Are applicants fingerprinted when required by state law and required to take a medical exam in compliance with state licensing regulations? Are background checks and written references mandatory?

7. Does the center have a written, planned program you can see in action? Are learning programs designed specifically for each age group?

8. Are educational programs focused on the whole child, designed to meet the social, emotional, physical and intellectual needs of children?

Anderson suggests carrying a checklist and taking notes while touring facilities. Answering these questions about the facilities, staff and educational programs will help parents make a more informed decision.