



## Preschool/Daycare Checklist

What are some of the things you should be looking for when choosing a preschool or daycare for your child? Use the following printable checklist to jot down notes when calling and touring centers. Even if the first one you visit gives you a good feeling, visit at least three to give you a sense of what's going on in the preschool/daycare environment.

### Step 1: Phone Pre-screening

Daycare name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Director: \_\_\_\_\_

Business hours: \_\_\_\_\_

Cost weekly: \_\_\_\_\_

Daily: \_\_\_\_\_

Place available for: \_\_\_\_\_

Recommended by: \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 2: The First Visit (preferably with spouse or alone, but without child)

#### Greeting

- Do you like the way you were greeted?
- Do they have an open door policy for parents?
- Is there a parent bulletin board to let you know what's happening in the daycare?

#### Licensing

- Is the daycare registered with the state? What's the permit number?
- Are the educators certified or have diplomas in early childhood education?
- Does the staff have their first-aid certificates up-to-date?
- Do they have a parent board or parents committee?

## Environment

- Was the indoor temperature adequate?
- Was there air circulating or did it seem stuffy?
- Does the daycare smell clean?
- Are the toys washed on a regular bases?
- Are the bathrooms clean?
- Are there gates in front of the stairways?
- Is there a fenced backyard with outdoor toys and climbing structures?

## Educators and Other Staff

- Are these adults interacting pleasantly with the children?
- Are the educators friendly and full of life?
- Can you hear songs and music?

## Health and Safety

- Are the lunches and snacks prepared on site?
- Is the menu posted?
- Menu's based on the four food groups: meat, fruits, vegetables and dairy?
- Do they have fried food and offer junk food?
- How do they handle children with food allergies?
- Do they offer a snack in the morning and one in the afternoon?
- Did they have first-aid kits accessible?
- Did you see fire extinguishers and fire escape plans?

## Activities

- Are there weekly themes such as seasons, animals, holidays, etc.?
- Do they encourage running, jumping, dancing and moving their bodies?
- Do they encourage drawing, cutting, painting, and gluing?
- Do they have puzzles, story books and have more toys than not enough?
- Do they have group games?
- Do you see puppets and dolls?
- Do you see the classroom divided into centers?
- Do they encourage talking and singing?
- Do they teach the same values as your family?
- Do they go outside everyday (weather permitting)?
- Did the children present seem relaxed and having a good time?

## Closing the Visit

- How many children per educator?
  - Home daycare: 1 adult for 6 children
  - In daycare: 1 adult for 4 babies
  - 1 adult for 8 toddlers
  - 1 adult for 10 children (4- to 5-years-old)

\* These are averages. Check your state laws.

- When you asked, did they provide you with three references?
- Did you feel comfortable asking questions?
- Did the director offer more information?

## Other questions you might want to know:

--What's the policy for vacations and holidays?

- What is the policy for sick children? Can they give medication to your child?
- What is their policy on colds, fevers and chicken pox?
- What's the nap situation? What happens to the child who doesn't want to nap?
- What if your child doesn't want to participate in a certain activity, is his decision respected?
- Try to take a few minutes to get to know the educator that would be with your child. How long has she been in this field? What's her favorite activity with the children? How does she teach responsibilities, problem solving and self control? How does she respond to challenging behaviors such as biting, hitting, etc.

Make the reference calls check before the next visit.

- #1 name and number
- #2 name and number
- #3 name and number
- Have called the state office and/or Better Business Bureau to see if this daycare is actually registered and involved in any infractions or frauds.

**Step 3: Second Visit (with child)**

- How did your child react?
- Did your child seem to enjoy himself/herself?
- Does your child know some children in the center?

Your feelings and your child's feelings were positive - great, but go visit another center. If something doesn't "feel" right, listen to your instincts. Listen to your gut feeling and don't trust your child to that center. Hopefully you'll have the opportunity to visit more than one center and have time to analyze them. Finding the perfect daycare can take some time. But, if you take some time and check out all of the options available to you, you should be able to find one that matches your desires and needs.

**Notes**

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 Checklist courtesy of PreschoolersToday.com, an Internet community for parents of children ages 3-5.