



Your Employee and Family Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Guide for choosing a group daycare centre

Group daycare centres vary greatly in size, location, environment and the style and quality of the care provided.



Use a consumer approach during your search. You are purchasing a valuable service and should assess your needs and expectations together with the quality of care, to make an informed decision.

Tips on choosing a daycare centre

Conduct a pre-screening check. You can save yourself time and energy—which are both things you are undoubtedly short of—by pre-screening a number of different centres before short-listing the ones you will visit.

- Is the location convenient for your home, office, child's school or other family members?
- What is the ratio of children to staff members?
- What ages of children do they accommodate?
- What are the hours? Do they offer flexible or extended hours?
- Do they have vacancies?
- What is the cost?

Take a tour. You will probably want to visit several different facilities before making a firm decision. You may be feeling pressure from your employer or temporary child care provider, but don't rush into a hasty choice. Take the time to review your options carefully to make sure they fit all your needs.

Questions to ask:

- What experience and qualifications do the staff have?
- Is there always someone available with up-to-date first aid training?
- What is the staff/child ratio? Is each child given some individual attention?
- What is the staff turnover rate?
- Is each staff member assigned to one group of children?
- What arrangements are made for rests during the day?
- Does the program include enrichment activities?
- What would be a typical daily routine?
- Is a specific child development theory or teaching method used?
- Is the whole program evaluated on a regular basis?
- Will your child's progress be assessed regularly with plans developed for his or her needs?

- Will you receive regular reports on your child's progress? Will you have opportunities to share progress and goals from home?
- How is discipline handled?
- What will happen if your child is ill?
- Is there a procedure for handling an injury?
- What happens when a child has an infectious illness?
- What professional development choices are available to the staff? Do they participate regularly?
- What will happen if you are unexpectedly late to collect your child? Are there overtime charges?
- Will they provide you with names of other parents to call for references?

Things to look for— inside physical setting

- Is it clean, bright and well ventilated?
- Is there sufficient space for the children's activities?
- Are there areas for different activities, such as quiet play or more vigorous activities?
- Is child-sized furniture available?
- Do the children have their own cubby holes or storage areas for sweaters, artwork and notices for parents?
- Are there pleasant and clean areas for eating and sleeping? Does each child have his or her own blanket?
- Is the toilet area clean and accessible?
- Have adequate safety precautions been taken?
- What provisions are made for fire safety? Are the exits well marked? Are there adequate fire and smoke detectors and sprinklers?
- Is there a first aid box?

Things to look for—outside physical setting

- Is there a safe and pleasant outdoor play area?
- Is there a variety of playground equipment? Is it well maintained?
- Is the area safely fenced off?
- Is there space to run around, ride bikes and sit quietly?

The children

- Do the children look relaxed and content?
- Do they appear physically well cared for? Are they helped with nose wiping, washing and dressing?
- Do the children seem busy and involved?
- Does staff deal with bullying quickly?
- How is the noise level? Is it quiet at sleep time? Is there laughter and merriment?

- How are the children disciplined?
- Do they seem to have close relationships with the staff?
- Does each child receive proper attention from the caregivers?

Once you have narrowed the selection, you may want to return to your preferred choice for a final check. Depending on your child's personality, you may want to consider taking him or her along for this visit.

please refer to your benefit material for more information. For immediate assistance, call 1.844.880.9137.