



**Is This the Right Place for My Child?**  
**40 Research-Based Indicators of High-Quality Child Care**  
**Make a copy of this checklist to use with each program you visit**  
**and place a check in the box if the program meets your expectations.**

√	Will my child be supervised?	Notes: <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>														
	Are children watched at all times, including when they are sleeping?															
	Are adults warm and welcoming? Do they pay individual attention to each child?															
	Are positive guidance techniques used? Do adults avoid negative punishments?															
	Are the caregiver/teacher-to-child ratios appropriate and do they follow the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) guidelines?  <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 33%;">Number of Caregivers</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Child Care Center</td> <td style="width: 33%;">Family Child Care</td> </tr> <tr> <td>One caregiver per</td> <td>4 infants</td> <td>2 infants</td> </tr> <tr> <td>One caregiver per</td> <td>7 toddlers</td> <td>4 toddlers</td> </tr> <tr> <td>One caregiver per</td> <td>10 preschoolers</td> <td>4 preschoolers</td> </tr> <tr> <td>One caregiver per</td> <td>15 school-agers</td> <td>4 school-agers</td> </tr> </table>		Number of Caregivers	Child Care Center	Family Child Care	One caregiver per	4 infants	2 infants	One caregiver per	7 toddlers	4 toddlers	One caregiver per	10 preschoolers	4 preschoolers	One caregiver per	15 school-agers
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√	Is this a safe and healthy place for my child?															
	Do adults and children wash their hands (after using the bathroom, changing diapers, eating, etc.)?	<hr/>														
	Are diaper-changing surfaces cleaned and disinfected after each use?	<hr/>														
	Do all of the children enrolled have the required immunizations, or the appropriate immunization exemption paperwork on file?	<hr/>														
	Are medicines labeled and locked?	<hr/>														
	Do adults keep records of medications?	<hr/>														
	Are cleaning supplies and other poisonous materials locked up, out of children's reach?	<hr/>														
	Is there a plan to follow if a child is injured, sick or lost?	<hr/>														
	Are first aid kits readily available?	<hr/>														
	Is there a plan for responding to disasters (fire, flood, etc.)?	<hr/>														
	Has a satisfactory criminal history background check been conducted on each adult present? Was the check based on fingerprints?	<hr/>														
	Have all the adults who are left alone with children had background and criminal screenings?	<hr/>														
	Is the outdoor play area a safe place for children to play? Is it checked each morning for hazards before children use it? Is the equipment the right size and type for the age of the children who use it? Is the playground area surrounded by a fence at least 4 ft. tall? Is the equipment placed on ground cover that will absorb a fall, such as cedar chips, pea gravel, or rubber-like material? Is the equipment in good and safe condition?	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>														
	Is the number of children per adult in each group limited?  <table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%;">Child Care Center</td> <td style="width: 50%;">Family Child Care</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8 infants</td> <td>6 children ages 0-12</td> </tr> <tr> <td>14 toddlers</td> <td>8 children ages 2-12</td> </tr> <tr> <td>20 preschoolers</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>30 school-agers</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Child Care Center	Family Child Care	8 infants	6 children ages 0-12	14 toddlers	8 children ages 2-12	20 preschoolers		30 school-agers		<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>				
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√	<b>Is the program well managed?</b>	Notes: _____
	Does the program have the highest level of licensing offered by the state?	
	Are there written personnel policies and job descriptions?	
	Are parents/families and staff asked to evaluate the program?	
	Are staff members evaluated each year; do providers do a self-assessment?	
	Is there a written annual training plan for staff professional development?	
	Is the program evaluated each year by someone outside the program?	
	Is the program accredited by a national organization?	
√	<b>Does the program work with parents/families?</b>	
	Will I be welcome any time my child is in care?	
	Is parents'/families' feedback sought & used in making program improvements?	
	Will I be given a copy of the program's policies and procedures manual?	
	Are annual conferences held with parents/families?	
√	<b>Have the adults been trained to care for children?</b>	
	In a center, does the director have a degree and some experience in caring for children?	
	Do the teachers have a CDA (Child Development Associate) credential or Associate's degree and experience in caring for children?	
	If a family child care home, has the provider had specific training on children's development and experience caring for children?	
	Is there always someone present who has current CPR and first aid training?	
	Are the adults up to date on their initial 20-hour STARS training and do they continue to receive training on caring for children?	
	Have the adults been trained on child abuse prevention and how to report suspected cases?	
√	<b>Will my child be able to grow and learn?</b>	
	For older children, are there specific areas for different kinds of play, such as books, blocks, puzzles, art, etc.?	
	For infants and toddlers, are there toys that "do something" when the child plays with them?	
	Is the play space organized and are materials easy-to-use? Are some materials available at all times?	
	Are there daily or weekly activity plans available? Have the adults planned experiences for the children to enjoy? Will the activities help children learn?	
	Do the adults talk with the children during the day? Do they engage them in conversations? Ask questions, when appropriate?	
	Do the adults read to children at least twice a day or encourage them to read, if they can read?	

These questions are based on research about child care.

You can read the research findings on the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA) website under "Questions for Parents to Ask" at <http://www.naccrra.org>.

When looking for a new child care situation, there are six main quality indicators that should be considered, according to the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. Keeping these in mind during your search will help you determine if a setting is in the best interest of your child.

✓ **Group Size**

Find out how many children are in the group. The smaller the group, the better. Imagine a group of 25 two-year olds with five adults, compared to a group of 10 two-year olds with two adults. Both groups have the same adult to child ratio. Which would be calmer and safer? In which group would your child excel?

✓ **Ratio**

The number of staff required in a child care home or center depends not only on the *number* of children in that setting but also on the *ages* of the children.

✓ **Family Involvement**

Ask a prospective child care provider about their policy on family involvement. You want to see opportunities to be involved in activities, with regular parent meetings held. You should feel welcome anytime.

✓ **Caregiver Education & Staff Turnover**

Ask about the teacher who will be in your child's room. How long has the teacher worked in the program? What is his/her educational background? You do not want to see a high staff turnover in a child care center. How long has the family child care provider been running her program? Is he/she involved with a support group? As a parent, you want to be assured that the people who will be caring for your child are not stressed, but rather, well supported with a network of professional colleagues. You want to know that the staff is knowledgeable and understand appropriate development, activities, and behaviors for children.

✓ **Health & Safety**

The environment should be clean, with an emphasis on hand-washing. Tables are washed. Electrical sockets are covered. Staircases are childproofed. Toys and equipment should be clean, used, and not broken. Outdoor play spaces must be free of hazards of all kinds. Common hazards include access to a busy street, broken glass or peeling paint, tools, and construction materials.

✓ **Accreditation**

This means that a child care center or family child care provider has made a commitment to provide a high quality program for young children and their families. Ask a director of a child care center if they are NAEYC accredited (National Association of Education of Young Children). For additional information on NAEYC accreditation, go to [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org). Ask a family child care provider if they have a CDA (Child Development Associate). For additional information on CDA, go to [www.cdacouncil.org](http://www.cdacouncil.org). Family child care providers may also become accredited with NAFCC (National Association of Family Child Care). For additional information on NAFCC accreditation, go to [www.nafcc.org](http://www.nafcc.org).