



TAKE THE TIME
 CHOOSING CHILD CARE AND
 EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

FUNDED BY



United States
 Department of
 Agriculture

AFFILIATED WITH



June 2014



TAKE THE TIME
 CHOOSING CHILD CARE AND
 EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES



TAKE THE TIME

CHOOSING CHILD CARE AND EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES FOR YOUR PRECIOUS CHILD IS ALL ABOUT TIME.

TIME MATTERS:

Finding the right environment and setting for your child is extremely important. You want to be sure that your child's time is well spent. The first five years are vital to children's physical, mental, social and emotional growth. A child from infancy to kindergarten will spend as many hours in a child care setting as he/she will spend in school from kindergarten through 12th grade. This time sets the stage for school readiness and the foundation for a child's life long success.

TIME COUNTS:

You and your child's caregiver or teacher are partners in the care and early education of your child. When you look at a child care setting, think about what your child will be seeing, hearing, and doing throughout the day. These are indicators to what your child will be learning. You want to be sure your child is in a setting with a caregiver or teacher who will provide safe, nurturing experiences where he or she can grow, develop and learn. Quality time counts.

ENJOY THE TIME:

It may not seem like it now, but the time before your child enters school will go very quickly. We wish you joy and pleasure and the parenting "time of your life."

Action for Children



As a not-for-profit agency, the Action for Children community resource and information services are available free-of-charge.



USING OUR SERVICE:

Our Family Engagement Specialists are dedicated to helping you with your child care search by phone or online. As a child care and early learning service, we provide families with confidential child care and education resources, which include home providers, child care centers, Head Start, preschools and after-school programs. We can provide information about state-licensing requirements, the availability of child care subsidies, and quality indicators to help you make an informed choice.

IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO:

- Interview, investigate, and evaluate each option.
- Verify the quality and experience of each caregiver.
- Choose a caregiver and setting appropriate to your child's needs and your personal satisfaction.

Action for Children does not license, recommend, endorse, guarantee, control, or regulate any child-care resource provided through its referral service.

60-MINUTE OBSERVATION 5C CHECKLIST:

The following is a guide for helping you choose and maintain good, safe child care. It is based upon the 5C's: **count, content, caregiver, contract, and communication.**

Plan to visit at least three settings. We suggest spending at least 60 minutes observing in each setting. Allow additional time to ask questions.

The right and responsibility for choosing child care belongs to the family. You know your child best. Take the time and choose carefully.





COUNT – 5 MINUTES

A smaller group size is better than a larger one.

Higher quality programs have fewer children per adult.

TAKE 5 MINUTES TO OBSERVE:

- The number of children per adult in the group.

ASK:

- How many children are cared for in the group during the hours you need care?
- Are there other adults present during the day?
- When required, ask to see posted license and current inspection reports.

OHIO LAW FOR FAMILY CHILD CARE HOMES:

- **Small:** A maximum of six children, including the caregiver's own children under age six, with no more than three children under age two
- **Large:** (7-12 children) Must be licensed Type A by the state and have a second caregiver. (Ask to see license and current inspection reports.)

OHIO LAW FOR CHILD CARE CENTERS:

One adult for every...

- five infants (under 12 months)
- six infants (12 to 18 months)
- seven toddlers (18 to 30 months)
- eight toddlers (30 to 36 months)
- 12 three-year-olds
- 14 four- and five-year-olds
- 18 school-age children under age 11

Remember that licensing regulations are only minimum health and safety standards.



CONTENT – 20 MINUTES

High quality programs have a variety of planned activities to help children develop physically, mentally and socially. Program activities should be suitable for the child's stage of development and individual interests.

TAKE 20 MINUTES TO OBSERVE:

- A balance of active and quiet activities
- Safe, fun, outdoor play space
- Relaxed eating time with nutritious food
- Safe and child-proofed activity areas
- Activities suitable for age of child
- A variety of appropriate toys, books and materials
- A clean, bright, cheerful setting
- Children enjoying themselves
- Children or caregivers working cooperatively to create activities and solve conflicts
- Staff working cooperatively and respectfully together
- Staff are aware and sensitive to individual family cultural beliefs

ASK:

- For a tour of the center or home to see where children will eat, sleep and play
- The daily schedule for activities you were unable to observe
- What will happen if your child doesn't want to eat, nap or participate in activities?
- What are the plans for fire and other emergencies?
- What are the safety precautions for pools and water play?
- If it is a center, is your program Step Up to Quality rated?

STEP UP TO QUALITY (SUTQ):

Step Up to Quality (SUTQ) is a 5-Star Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) administered by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) and the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) that recognizes and promotes learning and development programs that exceed licensing health and safety standards. Standards for Programs include 4 domains: Learning and Development, Administrative and Leadership Practices, Staff Qualifications & Professional Development, and Family and Community Partnerships. The SUTQ rating system was created to help parents and families identify programs of high quality. For SUTQ programs in your area, please contact Action for Children at 614-224-0222.



CAREGIVER—12 MINUTES

The caregiver you choose will be playing a critical role in your child's growth and development. **Make sure the caregiver is the kind of person who shares your views on discipline, health and safety, and how children learn.** Look for someone you can be comfortable communicating with about your child's care.

TAKE 12 MINUTES TO OBSERVE:

- Reaction to and interaction with children
- Gets down to child's level to talk or work with children
- Seems to enjoy children
- Evidence of good health practices, including hand-washing
- Serves nutritious meals and eats with children
- Uses acceptable disciplinary methods, no physical punishment and no yelling
- Promotes children's self-esteem through positive words and actions
- Gives children choices
- Encourages children to help themselves

ASK ABOUT:

- Program's non-smoking policy
- Caregiver's years of experience with children
- Caregiver's training (e.g., CPR, First Aid, Child Abuse and Neglect, Child Development); program accreditation (e.g. National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC), etc.)
- Studies have shown that trained caregivers provide a higher quality of care. Types of training can include CDA (Child Development Associate), 2-4 year degrees in Early Childhood and related fields, and state-required training
- Discipline practices and child management techniques
- Recognition of child abuse including awareness of Shaken Baby Syndrome



ACCREDITATION:

Programs that are accredited have gone beyond minimum licensing standards. These programs undergo in-depth self-assessment, independent observation, and approval by certified professionals. Two national accrediting sources are National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) for child care centers and National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) for family child care homes. Accreditation is one standard to use in your child care search. However, you must check and evaluate all settings, including accreditation to determine which is the best child care choice for your child and your family.





CONTRACT—15 MINUTES

It is best to have everything written down so that parents and caregivers clearly understand their responsibilities. Ask the caregiver to show you the written agreement and program philosophy.

TAKE 15 MINUTES TO READ THE WRITTEN AGREEMENT AND DISCUSS:

- Cost, late fees, method of payment, insurance
- Arrival and pickup times
- Discipline philosophy
- Sick policy for mildly and moderately ill children
- Holiday and Vacation policy
- Transportation of children
- Emergency plan(s)
- Days of operation and backup arrangements
- Policy for unannounced parent visits

ASK ABOUT:

- Background checks on provider and all other adults in contact with children in the home or center
- Who will be doing substitute care?
- Turnover rate of center caregivers; length of operation of child care home

Studies indicate that too many changes in caregivers in a year may have a harmful effect on children's learning and sense of security.



COMMUNICATION—8 MINUTES

It is important to know the best way to maintain ongoing contact with your child's caregiver.

TAKE 8 MINUTES TO OBSERVE:

- The way you were greeted, either on the phone or in person
- Methods of communication, e.g., notebooks, bulletin boards, photos
- Rules are specific and posted in a manner that children can understand and refer to regularly

ASK ABOUT:

- How information will be communicated to parent (e.g., progress reports, daily/weekly notes, etc.)
- The best way for the caregiver to receive information from parents (e.g., note, phone call, conversation at pick-up or drop-off)
- Where problems, concerns and questions with your child's care should be directed



5C CHECKLIST

Setting 1
Setting 2
Setting 3
Setting 4

Count

Number of children per adult in group?				
Are there other adults present during day?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Posted license available?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Does the provider meet ratios for Ohio?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N

Content (Program)

Good mix of active and quiet activities?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Safe, fun outdoor space?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Eating time is relaxed?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Age-appropriate activities?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Good variety of toys, books and materials?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Setting is clean, bright, cheerful?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Children appear to be having fun?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Children and Caregivers work cooperatively?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Overall impression of tour (rate 1-5)*				
Is a daily schedule posted?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Fire and Emergency plan in place?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Safety precautions posted for pool and water play?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Step Up to Quality Star-Rated?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Nationally accredited?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
What happens when children do not want to participate in planned activities?				
1. _____	2. _____			
3. _____	4. _____			

Caregiver

Interacts warmly with children?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Gets down to speak to children?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Seems to enjoy children?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Evidence of good health practices?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Serves nutritious meals?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Is provider on the USDA Food Program?*	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Eats with children?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Uses acceptable disciplinary methods?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Uses positive words and actions?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Provides children with choices?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Encourages children to help themselves?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Non-smoking policy?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N

Caregiver Cont'd

Setting 1
Setting 2
Setting 3
Setting 4

Years of experience with children?				
References are satisfactory?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Knows about Shaken Baby Syndrome?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Caregiver's training and certification:	(check all that apply)			
CPR				
First Aid				
Child Development				
Accreditation				
Child Abuse & Neglect Prevention				
Degree in Early Childhood Education (two-year to four-year plus)				
Child Development Associate credential (CDA)				

Contract (Written Agreement)

Rates and Applicable Fees documented?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Discipline philosophy documented?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Sick policy documented?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Holiday and Vacation policy?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Transportation policy documented?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Days of operation and back up arrangements posted?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Announced and/or unannounced visitor policies?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Insurance?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N

Communication

How were you greeted? (rate 1-5)**				
Do you feel that you will be able to communicate with the caregiver as your partner in helping your child grow, develop and learn?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N

Other Considerations

Did you take the time to form an overall impression and gut feeling about the setting?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Would your child learn and develop in this setting?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N
Did you check all of the references both past and present?	Y N	Y N	Y N	Y N

* 1=Poor to 5=Excellent

** Provider cannot charge for USDA sponsored meals and snacks.

*** 1=Poorly to 5=Warmly

THE TIME BEFORE YOUR CHILD IS IN CARE. . .

We all want our children to feel safe, secure, and have an enriching experience in child care. This means choosing someone who can become your best partner in child care. It is not easy. A child care search takes time.

Take this 5C guide for choosing child care with you to help you in your search.

TAKE THE TIME:

- Check on your state's regulations for each type of care you are considering. When you visit, ask to see the program's applicable license and the child care center's current inspection report.
- Visit more than one option—preferably three or more.
- Observe the five C's for choosing child care: count, content, caregiver, contract, communication (Suggested times are included.)
- Observe each program option for at least 60 minutes.
- Set aside time to talk with the caregiver(s) in each program. (Suggested questions are included.)
- Look for a caregiver who is a good match with your family.
- Go back to your best choice, preferably at a different time of day.
- Visit with your child.
- Before you decide, put yourself in your child's place. Would he or she like it?
- Ask for and check all references from current and past clients.



THE TIME AFTER YOUR CHILD IS IN CARE. . .

Here are some suggestions for helping to maintain quality care for your child.

- Communicate daily with your caregiver.
- Be open about your feelings and concerns.
- Don't let concerns build up.
- Tell the caregiver about family changes which affect your child, e.g., divorce, new baby, parent separations.
- Tell the caregiver about any changes in your child's health.
- Respect the program's policies and procedures.
- Show that you appreciate your child's caregiver.
- Stay involved with your child care program, e.g., visit at lunch, go on field trips.
- At times, visit the program unannounced.
- Maintain contact with the other families of children in care to share support and share concerns.
- Advocate for quality child care.
- Support your child's learning experiences.

CHILD CARE AND EARLY LEARNING RESOURCES IN CENTRAL OHIO

Action for Children: Central Ohio's child care and early learning resource and information agency—provides information to families to help them make informed choices about child care centers, home providers, preschools, after-school programs and nannies. Services offered include outreach to children with special needs and culturally diverse families.

Action for Children toll-free number:
855-302-4453

Website:
www.actionforchildren.org

Columbus and Franklin County (Main Office):
614-224-0222

Delaware County:
740-369-0649

Madison, Fairfield, Licking, Pickaway and Union Counties:
855-302-4453

OTHER CHILD CARE AND EARLY LEARNING RESOURCES

Ohio Child Care Licensing:
For viewing current center inspection reports and/or identified complaints, go to: www.jfs.ohio.gov (Click on child care)
ODJFS Child Care Help Desk 877-302-2347

Step Up to Quality (SUTQ):
For information about Ohio's quality rating system for child care programs, go to www.stepuptoquality.org

Help Me Grow (HMG):
An early identification and intervention program for Ohio's expectant parents or parents of newborns, infants, or toddlers with concerns about their child's development:
www.helpmegrowohio.org Toll-free 800-755-4769 (GROW)

Columbus Public Health:
For immunizations and other clinic services, e.g., WIC (Women, Infants and Children): 614-645-7417

Nationwide Children's Hospital:
Toll-free 800-792-8401

Early Childhood Ohio:
www.earlychildhoodohio.org

NATIONAL CHILD CARE RESOURCES

Child Care Aware®
(a program of **Child Care Aware of America**):
National information line providing child-care information and other parenting resources to families in both English and Spanish
www.childcareaware.org Toll-free 800-424-2246

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC): www.naeyc.org; Toll-free 800-424-2460

National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC):
www.nafcc.org; Toll-free 800-359-3718

STATEWIDE ASSOCIATION

Ohio Child Care Resource and Referral Association (OCCRRA):
Toll-free 877-547-6978



Action for Children respects the richness of diversity and supports programs and services which meet the varied needs of diverse segments of the community.

Action for Children maintains a policy of confidentiality regarding all data supplied by individuals requesting child care and education resources and services.

Action for Children is not a regulatory agency, but it does believe in the importance of supporting the quality of community child care by maintaining an effective system for documenting and responding to complaints. The Agency will accept complaints in oral or written form from parents or other concerned individuals about the agency services and staff, and licensed, certified or unregulated child care. The staff will help the complainant follow appropriate next-step procedures. Complaints will be recorded and handled in a confidential manner.

"Take the Time" . . . Developed through a contract from the Ohio Department of Health. Supported in part by project # MCJ 396022 from the Maternal Child Health Bureau (Title V, Social Security Act.) Health Resources Administration. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.