

Action for Children



YOUR SOURCE
For Early Learning and Child Care Services

78 Jefferson Avenue • Columbus, OH 43215



TAKE THE TIME
CHOOSING CHILD CARE AND
EARLY LEARNING EXPERIENCES

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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 lifetime success.

TIME COUNTS:

You and your child's caregiver/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/teacher who will provide safe, nurturing experiences where he/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."



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



USING OUR SERVICE:

Our information and resource specialists are dedicated to helping you with your child care search by phone or Internet. As a child care and early learning service, we provide families with 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 (3) 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?
- Where required, ask to see posted license or certification 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 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/caregivers working cooperatively to create activities and solve conflicts

ASK:

- For a tour of center or home to see where child will eat, sleep and play
- The daily schedule (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/water play?
- If center, is your program Step Up to Quality rated?

STEP UP TO QUALITY (SUTQ):

Ohio has a strong commitment to quality child care and early learning through its quality rating system Step Up to Quality. The role of SUTQ is to measure, monitor and promote high quality child care. The program standards include implementation of a research-based curriculum, education and professional development requirements for staff, leadership in administration, community engagement and health promotion.



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 about 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:

- Face (warm, loving) and voice (calm, soothing, strong but caring)
- Gets down to child's level to talk or work with children
- Seems to enjoy children
- Evidence of good health practices, e.g., 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/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 criterion or standard to use in your child care search. However, you must check and evaluate all settings, accredited included, 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
- Pickup times/arrival times
- Discipline philosophy
- Sick policy for mildly and moderately ill children
- Holiday/Vacation policy
- Transportation of children
- Emergency plan(s)
- Days of operation and backup arrangements
- Policy for parents to visit unannounced

ASK ABOUT:

- Background checks on provider and all other adults in contact with children in home/center
- Other adults in contact with children in home/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 (on the phone and in person)
- Methods of communication, e.g., notebooks, bulletin boards, photos

ASK ABOUT:

- How information will be communicated to parent (e.g., progress reports, daily/weekly notes, etc.)
- The best way for caregiver to receive information from parents (e.g., note, phone call, conversation at pick-up or drop-off)
- Where should problems, concerns and questions with your child's care 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 or certification 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 & 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/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/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 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/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/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/Vacation policy?	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Transportation policy documented?	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N	Y	N
Days of operation/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. . .

You want the time your child spends in care away from you to be safe, secure and enriching. That means choosing the best person to become your 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, you may ask to see the program's applicable license or certification and child care center's current inspection report.
- Visit more than one option—preferably three (3) or more.
- Observe the five (5) 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/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:
855-30-CHILD (24453)

Website:
www.actionforchildren.org

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

Delaware County:
740-369-0649

Union County:
937-645-2017

Madison County (Child Care Network):
740-852-0975, ext. 15

Fairfield, Licking and Pickaway Counties:
toll free 855-30-CHILD

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)
Toll-free 866-635-3748

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

NATIONAL CHILD CARE RESOURCES

Child Care Aware (a service of Child Care Aware America):
National information line providing child-care information and other parenting resources to families in both English and Spanish 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.

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