



As you think about child care for your infant or toddler...



**make a visit...
ask questions...
then decide.**

Introduction

Choosing good child care is an important decision. Safe and positive child care sets the stage for healthy growth and development. It takes time, patience and an understanding of what to look for when selecting child care.

Learn about different child care options and visit programs before making a decision. Call and make an appointment. Look around the child care setting carefully. Watch how the children and adults interact with one another. Ask Questions. Listen. Talk to parents who use the program.

Once you have selected a child care program and your child is in care, keep asking questions. Always check to make sure the program still meets the needs of your family. It's a lot of work, but your child is worth it.

Selecting child care is an important step in the life of your child. You know the needs of your child and family. This important decision will make a big difference in your child's development, health and happiness.

Think About Child Care Resources

Call the New York Parents' Connection at **1-800-345-KIDS** or visit **www.ocfs.ny.gov** for other As You Think About Child Care materials.

- As You Think About Child Care
- As You Think About Child Care for your Infant or Toddler
- As You Think About Child Care for Your 3- to 5-Year-Old
- As You Think About Child Care for Your School-Age Child

Six Tips When Looking for Child Care

1. Visit the child care program while it is open and the children are there.
2. Take the time to ask questions. Look around the program to see how things are handled.
3. Make sure the child care program:
 - Has enough caregivers/teachers for the number of children. Check New York State regulations to confirm compliance.
 - Takes steps to prevent accidents and has a plan to handle fire or medical emergencies.
 - Knows how to help children stay healthy and feeds infants on their own schedule.
 - Plans a balance of indoor and outdoor time that is both active and quiet.
4. A good relationship between the children and caregivers/teachers is important. The caregiver/teacher should:
 - Enjoy talking to and playing with children.
 - Have experience, education and/or training in caring for children.
5. Consider the cost, location and hours the child care is open.
6. Talk to parents who use the programs and keep looking until you are satisfied with your choice.

Think About the Type of Child Care

Licensed or registered child care settings must meet specific health, safety and program requirements. Some programs may not be required to meet state regulations to legally provide care. These options should meet your own standards for the health, safety and development of your child.

Regulated Child Care Situations for All Ages

- Day Care Center - more than six children, not in someone's home, for more than three hours a day.
- Small Day Care Center - three to six children, not in someone's home, for more than three hours a day.
- Family Day Care Home - three to six children, in a home for more than three hours a day. One or two more school-age children may come after school. There must be one caregiver for every two children under two.
- Group Family Day Care Home - seven to 12 children in a home, with the help of an assistant, for more than three hours a day. Up to four additional school-age children may come after school.
- Head Start - licensed as a day care center and provides additional services to children and families.
- Pre-Kindergarten Programs - offered by many public schools for 3- to-5-year-old children during the school year.
- School-Age Child Care - seven or more children (kindergarteners through 12-year-olds) during non-school hours.

Think About the Type of Child Care

Legal but Not Regulated Child Care Situations

- Informal Care - care provided by a child's relative, a family friend or neighbor who watches one or two children not related to the caregiver, but never more than a total of eight children.
- In-home Care - when a caregiver comes to your home to watch your children.
- Non-Public Nursery School and Pre-Kindergarten Programs - a program that is not in someone's home that cares for children three hours a day or less.

Completing the Checklist

Visit each program. Ask questions and look around to see how things are handled.

Ask about the things that are important to you and not on the checklist. Based on what you find, write Y/Yes or N/No in the space provided.

Once you've completed your visits, compare the different programs. Talk to other parents who use the program. Then decide on the best program for your child and family.

Think About Family Needs

Questions to Ask and what to look for...

The cost of care, program hours and transportation are important things to consider when selecting child care. Make sure the policies and rules of the child care are available in writing.

Family Needs	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
You can get to the child care setting from home and work.			
The program is open during the hours your child needs care.			
Ask about payment policies including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child care subsidy payments• Payment options• Due dates and late fees• Vacation and holiday payment			
Parents may visit the child care program any time it is open.			
Parents get a copy of the policies and rules for the child care program.			
Parents are told about the activities for children at least once a week.			

Think About the Caregiver/ Teacher

Questions to Ask and what to look for...

A good relationship between the child, family, and caregiver/teacher is important to everyone. The caregiver/teacher should have experience, education and/or training in child care. The caregiver/teacher should enjoy talking to and playing with children and communicate well with parents.

Think About the Caregiver/ Teacher	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
The caregiver/teacher has experience caring for infants and toddlers and really enjoys working with them.			
The caregiver/teacher takes training and/or education courses to learn about the health, safety, and development of children.			
The caregiver/teacher greets each child and parent when coming to and leaving the program.			
When a child is upset the caregiver/teacher meets the child's needs quickly even when the program is busy.			
The caregiver/teacher respects and understands the values and culture of the child's family.			

Think About the Caregiver/Teacher

Think About the Caregiver/ Teacher	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
All regulated caregivers/teachers, alternates, substitutes and anyone over 18 years old living in a regulated child care home have been fingerprinted and completed all required criminal Child Abuse and Justice Center background checks.			
Ask the informal caregiver if he/she has a criminal background and if anyone else over 18 years old will be in the home during child care hours.			

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Think About Safety

Questions to Ask and what to look for...

It is important to know what steps the program takes to prevent accidents and what plans are in place in case of an emergency.

Preventing Accidents	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
Children are supervised by the caregiver/teacher and can be seen and heard at all times, even at naptime.			
The child care program is childproofed to prevent accidents. Protections include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poisonous and dangerous materials, like medicines and cleaning solutions, are stored out of the reach of children.• Electrical sockets are covered.• There are childproof locks on cabinets.• Hanging cords from blinds are secured.• Small household objects that may be a choking hazard are out of reach.• There are safety gates on stairs.			
The child care program has been checked for peeling paint, radon and asbestos.			

Think About Safety

Preventing Accidents	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
There is fencing or another sturdy barrier to keep children away from pools, ponds, and other bodies of water.			

Handling Emergencies	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
The program has a plan to handle fire and medical emergencies.			
The program has a stocked first-aid kit.			
The caregiver/teacher knows how to handle minor injuries and what to do when an injury requires a trip to the doctor or emergency room.			
There is a working phone. Emergency telephone numbers are posted.			

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Think About Safety

Fire Emergencies	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
There are smoke detectors on each floor and multipurpose fire extinguishers in the child care home. The day care center has a fire detection system.			
There are at least two separate building exits in case of fire.			
The plan to escape a fire emergency is practiced at least once a month with the children, even during naptime.			

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Think About Keeping Children Healthy

Questions to Ask and what to look for...

To keep children healthy, the program should encourage good health habits and take steps to prevent the spread of germs. Make sure you know the program has an approved health care plan and ask to see a copy. Child care programs must also follow specific rules to give over-the-counter and prescription medicine to children.

Keeping Children Healthy	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
All children must have up-to-date immunizations.			
The caregiver/teacher prevents the spread of germs by washing hands many times during the day. Children also wash their hands often during the day.			
The child care setting is clean. Toys, furniture and floors are washed frequently with a bleach solution to prevent the spread of germs.			
Diapers are changed when dirty and the changing area is cleaned with a bleach solution after each use.			

Think About Keeping Children Healthy

When Children Are Sick or Injured	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
The program's health care plan meets the health care needs of my child.			
The program has a plan to handle medical emergencies.			
The health care plan includes whether the caregiver/teacher will give medicine to children.			
<p>The caregiver/teacher has the skills and training to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give over-the-counter or prescription medicine to children. • Know a minor injury from one that needs medical attention. • Give first aid and CPR. 			

Eating Healthy	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
Menus for meals and snacks include a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, bread and milk products.			
Feeding infants is planned with parents. Infants are held when fed a bottle and start eating solid foods slowly and carefully.			

Think About Their Day

Questions to Ask and what to look for...

A child care setting that offers a variety of activities and experiences will help children develop skills for future readiness.

Look for a balance of active, quiet, indoor and outdoor play based on the abilities and interests of children.

Talking and Language	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
To help children use words, the caregiver/teacher: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reads stories, sings songs and names objects with the children.• Talks to children even during times like changing diapers and feeding.• Offers books, games and other materials such as colorful cloth and cardboard books.			

Watching Television	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
Watching television and videos is not recommended for infants and toddlers.			

Think About Their Day

Learning, Thinking, and Imagination	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
<p>There is a variety of and enough materials and toys that are clean, safe and in good repair such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe toys for infants to see, hear, touch, and put in their mouths. • Toys and materials like large cardboard blocks, water and sand, and stacking toys for toddlers. • Music toys, or a radio/CD/tape player. • Paper, crayons, paint, and clay for toddlers. 			

Active and Quiet Time	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
<p>The outdoor and indoor play spaces and equipment are clean, safe and free of sharp edges.</p>			
<p>The children are taken outdoors every day unless the weather is bad.</p>			

Toileting	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
<p>The caregiver/teacher works with parents to help toddlers with toilet use. Toileting accidents are handled calmly.</p>			

Think About Their Day

Active and Quiet Time	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
Indoor space is large enough for infants and toddlers to crawl, and to use balls and push/ride toys.			
There is soft furniture and toys when toddlers need quiet space and time.			
During naptime: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children are always seen and heard.• Infants sleep when needed.• The space is clean, quiet, and large enough.• Each child has a crib, mat, cot or bed with clean sheets and blankets.• Quiet activities are planned for children who wake up early or do not nap.			
To prevent Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, infants sleep on their backs. There are no stuffed toys, or soft or loose bedding in cribs.			

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Think About Positive Behavior Management

Questions to Ask and what to look for...

Programs need to set limits for children. Those limits depend on a child's age and abilities. Children should be reminded of the limits without hitting or scaring them, hurting their feelings or taking away something important like food or rest.

Corporal punishment is never allowed.

Positive Behavior Management	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
The program has a written Behavior Management Plan that is given to each parent.			
Parents agree to the program's Behavior Management Plan.			
Babies are not disciplined, and are cared for with a comforting voice and gentle touch.			
There is an understanding that toddlers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are just beginning to talk and when upset may bite, hit, kick or have a tantrum instead of using words. • Do not know how to share toys. • Need lots of space and a variety of interesting things to play with. • May get frustrated with an activity and need help finding something else to do. 			

Before Making the Decision

Questions to Ask and what to look for...

Compare and consider the different programs you visited during your search. Ask other parents about the programs. Call the regional office of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services for licensing history (including regulatory violations) for any regulated program. To contact your local regional office, call **1-800-732-5207** or visit the website at: **www.ocfs.ny.gov**. Then decide where you feel comfortable leaving your children and if it is the best fit for your family.

Before Making the Decision	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
The regional office of OCFS will let you know if the program: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Is licensed or registered.• Was licensed or registered in the past.• Has registration/licensing or violation history.			
Talk to other families who use the program.			

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Before Making the Decision

Caregiver/Teacher Information Ratios

Use this section to write information about the programs visited. There should be enough caregivers/teachers for the number of children in a program. Ratios for regulated care are found in the state regulations. For care that is legal but not regulated, the guidelines are listed in this brochure.

Program 1

Child Care Program: _____

Child Care Address: _____

Child Care Phone Number: _____

Type of Child Care: _____

Number of Children: _____

Number of Caregivers/Teachers: _____

Before Making the Decision

Program 2

Child Care Program: _____

Child Care Address: _____

Child Care Phone Number: _____

Type of Child Care: _____

Number of Children: _____

Number of Caregivers/Teachers: _____

Program 3

Child Care Program: _____

Child Care Address: _____

Child Care Phone Number: _____

Type of Child Care: _____

Number of Children: _____

Number of Caregivers/Teachers: _____

Before Making the Decision

Paying for Child Care

You may be eligible for help to pay for child care. Contact your county department of social services to get more information about child care subsidies. To find your local department of social services, call the NYS Parents' Connection at **1-800-345-KIDS** or go to **www.ocfs.ny.gov**.

New York State Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit

You may qualify to claim the New York State child and dependent care tax credit. For more information contact the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance General Tax Information at **1-800-225-5829** or go to the website at **www.tax.ny.gov**.

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Office of Children and Family Services

For a copy of the New York State child care regulations and/or more information on selecting child care, contact your local child care resource and referral agency, visit the NYS Office of Children and Family Services website at www.ocfs.ny.gov or call the New York Parents' Connection at: **1-800-345-KIDS**.

Call the Child Care Complaint Line at **1-800-732-5207** with concerns about a program.

To report child abuse and neglect call **1-800-342-3720**.

Other brochures available through the New York State Office of Children and Family Services:

Kieran's Law, Pub-4628, a brochure on the responsibilities and services available to you as an employer of an in-home care-giver. Questions, Call **1-800-345-KIDS**.

Pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services will make this material available in an appropriate format upon request.



Office of Children and Family Services

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