

**As you think about
child care for your
3- to 5-year-old...**



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



**Office of Children
and Family Services**

Capital View Office Park
52 Washington Street
Rensselaer, New York 12144

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 programs and visit them 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 setting 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 **(800) 345-KIDS** or visit **www.ocfs.ny.gov** for copies of:

- 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 School-Age Child



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www.ocfs.ny.gov

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 agency, visit the NYS Office of Children and Family Services website at **www.ocfs.ny.gov** or call the New York Parents' Connection at **(800) 345-KIDS**.

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

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

Another brochure 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 caregiver.

This publication is available in Spanish.

Pub-1115C (Rev. 6/2015)

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.

Resources

A copy of the regulations is available at each regulated child care site, through the local Child Care Resource and Referral agency, the NYS Office of Children and Family Services website at www.ocfs.ny.gov or NYS Parents' Connection at **(800) 345-KIDS**.

For more information on selecting child care contact your local Child Care Resource and Referral agency or contact the New York Parents' Connection at **(800) 345-KIDS** or visit www.ocfs.ny.gov.

If you have concerns about a child care program, call the Child Care Complaint Line at: **(800) 732-5207**.

To report child abuse and neglect call: **(800) 342-3720**.

Notes: _____

1. Visit the child care program while it is open and 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 teaches them healthy eating habits.
 - Plans a balance of indoor and outdoor play that is active and quiet.
4. A good relationship between the children and caregiver/teacher is important. The caregiver/teacher should:
 - Enjoy talking to and playing with the 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 other parents who use the program and keep looking until you are satisfied with your choice.

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 age 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.

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 **(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 **(800) 225-5829** or go to the website at **www.tax.ny.gov**.

Notes: _____

Program 2

Child Care Program: _____

Child Care Address: _____

Child Care Phone #: _____

Type of Child Care: _____

Number of Children: _____

Number of Caregivers/Teachers: _____

Program 3

Child Care Program: _____

Child Care Address: _____

Child Care Phone #: _____

Type of Child Care: _____

Number of Children: _____

Number of Caregivers/Teachers: _____

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.

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 the hours your child needs care.			
Ask about payment policies including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child care subsidy payment • 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.			

Caregiver/Teacher Information Ratios

Use this space to write information about each program 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 #: _____

Type of Child Care: _____

Number of Children: _____

Number of Caregivers/Teachers: _____

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 program. Call the regional office of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services for the licensing history (including regulatory violations) of regulated programs. Violations are also listed on the OCFS website at www.ocfs.ny.gov To contact your local regional office call (800) 732-5207 or visit the website at www.ocfs.ny.gov. Then decide where you feel comfortable leaving your child 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.			

Notes: _____

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 children 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, substitutes and anyone over 18 years old living in a regulated child care home have been fingerprinted and completed all required criminal, child abuse background checks and Justice Center 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.			

Notes: _____

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.			
The Behavior Management Plan for 3- to 5-year-olds include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gentle reminders to help them get along. • Help to talk about their feelings and use their words. • Reasonable limits. 			
There is enough space and a variety of interesting things to play with. The caregiver/teacher helps children find something else to do when frustrated with an activity.			

Active and Quiet Time	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
For outdoor water play, the program does not use wading pools and other pools not approved for use.			
There is soft furniture and stuffed toys when children need a quiet space and time.			
The program plans rest/naptime for the children each day: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are always seen and heard during naptime. • The space is quiet and large enough for naptime. • Children have their own mat, cot or bed with clean sheets and blankets. • Quiet activities are planned for children who wake up early or do not nap. 			

Notes: _____

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 emergency.

Preventing Accidents	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
Children are supervised and can be seen and heard at all times, even at naptime.			
The 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 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.			
The program regularly checks the outdoor and indoor equipment for wear and tear.			

Handling Emergencies	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
The program has a plan to handle fire or medical emergencies.			
The program 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 numbers are posted.			
The program has a stocked first-aid kit.			

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 for children to use on their own:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoor and outdoor pretend play materials like dress-up clothes, pots and pans, toy tools, water and sand. • Paper, crayons, paint, and clay. • Toys, puzzles and a radio/CD/tape player. 			

Active and Quiet Time	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
The outdoor and indoor play spaces and equipment are clean, safe and free of sharp edges.			
The children are taken outdoors every day unless the weather is bad.			
Indoor space is large enough for active children to use balls, rugs and pads for tumbling and push/ride toys.			

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 school 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
<p>To help children use words, the caregiver/teacher:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reads stories, sings songs and names objects with the children. • Encourages the children to talk and ask questions. • Offers books, games and other materials such as magazines and tapes/CDs for the children to use on their own. 			

Watching Television	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
Television and videos are only used for short periods of time and for educational purposes.			
There are other activities for children who do not want to watch television or videos.			

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.			

Notes: _____

Think About Keeping Children Healthy

Think About Keeping Children Healthy

Questions to Ask and what to look for...

To keep children healthy, the caregiver/teacher 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 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 program 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.			

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.			

When Children Are Sick or Injured	Program 1	Program 2	Program 3
The health care plan includes whether the program will give medicine to children.			
The caregiver/teacher has the skills and training to: <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
Meals and snacks include a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, bread and milk products.			
Menus for meals and snacks are posted or given to parents ahead of time.			
Younger children are fed smaller portions. Foods that may cause choking like popcorn, carrots, peanuts or raisins are not served.			
Meal time is for learning skills like self-feeding finger foods, using a spoon or fork or setting the table.			