

SELECTING AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (CHILD CARE) PROGRAM

Finding convenient, affordable, good quality early childhood education program can take a lot of time! Although there are options, including family child care homes and child care centers, it is often difficult to evaluate the services. Ask questions. The steps listed below will help you find the type of early childhood education program that will provide for your child's physical, mental, and emotional health and development.

STEP ONE: DEFINING NEEDS OF PARENTS AND THE CHILD(REN)

Parent Needs

- Work schedule
- Financial considerations
- Location of centers
- Proper curriculum for **YOUR** child
- After school transportation

Child Needs

- To feel secure and loved
- To be safe
- To be active in exploring and to move about freely
- To develop means of communication through language, art, music, science and other media
- To feel pride in his or her **own** achievements
- To play, to have adequate recreation and to enjoy life

General Selection

When you have defined your needs and your child's needs and you have made up your mind about the type of child care you want, use this directory to make a list of the providers in your geographic area that meet your specific requirements.

STEP TWO: PHONE SCREENING

Begin by telephoning possible early childhood education providers. When you call, ask for either the director or the center manager. Check to see that this is a good time to talk as you will want the person's undivided attention.

Things to Tell

- Age and sex of your child
- Hours and days you need care
- When you want to start
- Previous child care experience
- Any special needs your child has

Selecting an Early Childhood Education Program Continued

Selecting an Early Childhood Education Program (Phone Screening) Continued

Things to Ask:

- Do you have any openings? Can I get on your waiting list?
- What is the philosophy of your program?
- How do you handle the mixed ages?
- What would my child be doing?
- What are the fees?
- Where are you located exactly?
- What is the size of the classes?
- How many children are in the class? What are the ages of the children?
- How many adults are in the class and what are their qualifications?
- Can I visit any time?
- How do you handle discipline?

STEP THREE: THE VISIT

- Using the results of your telephone calls, plan to visit and compare several child care centers before you make any final decisions.
- It is best to visit the centers during the morning hours of operation when the majority of the “educational” or “working” portion of the program takes place. If you are looking for a school-age program, then visit at a time after most of the children have arrived (e.g. 4 p.m.)
- Take a list of questions with you so that you are sure to obtain all the information you want. Do not be intimidated – remember, it is **your child** you will be leaving, not theirs.

STEP FOUR: SORTING OUT WHAT YOU SEE

Choosing a good child care facility for your child is a very important decision. Once you have made that decision, plan to review it after a short time and continue to monitor the facility regularly. In the end, no matter whether a caregiver is registered, licensed, or without official permit, that person is taking care of **YOUR** child. No inspector or official agency can take your place in determining whether your child will be safe, happy and well cared for.

YOU are the most important part of the process!

THE KEY FACTORS TO CONSIDER IN MAKING YOUR FINAL CHOICE INCLUDE:

1. Your child's needs

2. Your family needs
3. A center or provider with whom you feel comfortable and with whom you would be able to develop a partnership