

Childcare Center Director / Caregiver Interview

Name: _____

Center: _____

Address/Phone: _____

Use these questions to guide your search for the right childcare center. Visits can be as short as 15 minutes and as long as an hour — the more time you devote, the better.

Ask for a copy of their parent handbook. When you get home, check the parent handbook against the answers received below.

How long has the center been in business? _____

What are the center's accreditations? _____

Do you have space for my child? Yes / No If not, can we be placed on a waiting list, and how long is it? _____

What are your hours? _____

What is the holiday schedule? _____

How flexible are you with pickup and drop-off times? _____

What are your fees? _____

Is there a late pickup fee? _____

How and when do you bill? _____

Do you encourage visits from parents? Yes / No. Do you have an open-door policy for parents? What do you expect from me as a parent? _____

Employees should be educated, college degrees and background in early childhood development, with state required minimum of High school or GED, CPR, 1st Aid, Communicable Disease and Child Abuse prevention and recognition, as well as consistent trainings throughout the year.

Caregivers should be responsible, enthusiastic, and well-prepared, sharing your philosophies on key childrearing issues such as sleep, discipline, and feeding. A center with staff benefits is likely to have less teacher turnover, which means consistent care for your child. In real estate its' location, location, location...with children it is routine, routine, routine.

Talk to the caregivers, ask direct questions – Caregivers should be open and friendly. But remember they are supervising children so do not be offended if they continue to keep a watchful eye more on the children than their ability to maintain eye contact with you.

What are the staff's credentials and training?

Do they receive benefits? Yes / No. Such as? _____

How long does the average staff member stay at the center? _____

How do you screen staff? _____

Size: Look for a center with small groups of children and plenty of staff. The ratio of caregivers to children varies, depending on group size.

How are the kids grouped? Mixed age / Grouped age

What is your teacher-child ratio in each group? _____

Activities: A good childcare center will have a well-thought-out curriculum with a variety of activities. The program should be changed regularly so children don't get bored and have a chance to learn new skills.

Ask what is your educational philosophy?

Ask how do you discipline a child?

Ask how do you comfort a child?

What will my child be doing on any given day? What about extracurricular activities?

What role, if any, does television/technology or other media have at the center? _____

Hygiene and Safety: A good center is clean and sanitary and observes safety rules. If you see poorly maintained equipment or the center seems dingy and cramped, keep looking.

Watch a caregiver do a diaper change. There should be a barrier on the table, preferably gloves on the caretaker, hand on the child always, soiled diaper and wipes bagged and disposed of in a closed container, and changing table sprayed with a disinfectant.

Do caregivers wash their hands after diapering and before feeding?

Does the center have a sign-in and sign-out sheet? What security measures are in place? What are the policies on someone else picking up your child? Do they demand a written or verbal notice of changes even if the person is on the emergency list?

What is your sick-child policy? _____

Do you have a safe enclosed outside play area? _____

How often are the toys cleaned and/or replaced? _____

Food and Sleep: Ask for a copy of their menu plans. Are meals prepared at the Center or catered? Are the meals nutritious and plentiful? Ask what are serving sizes for age groups. If the center does not prepare the food, how does the center warm or cool food? Are babies fed on demand or on a schedule? How are new foods introduced to infants and toddlers as well as older children? Will you as a parent have to supply any food?

For sleeping, bedding should be fresh and firm (to reduce the risk of SIDS for babies) and nap areas should be clean and quiet.

Where do the children sleep? _____

Do you have a nap schedule? _____

Do you have a place for nursing moms to visit and breastfeed? _____

Does your child center collaborate with resource agencies in the community? If so, ask which ones? (A center that collaborates with other agencies is a Center that is proud of their Center).

What is the center's policy on food allergies?

Does your center do Fundraising? And if so for whom?

Does your center organize professional picture-taking?

How often do the children have outdoor activity? What do you do if it is raining or too cold to go outside?

Do the children go on Field Trips? Where did they go, and can parents go on Field trips?

How does the center handle outbreak of infectious diseases like chicken pox?

Additional considerations: Be sure to take a moment to ask yourself the following questions when you visit.

Do the staff and children seem happy and engaged? Yes / No

Are crying children responded to immediately? Yes / No.

Is the center clean and pleasant? Yes / No

Can you join your child for lunch? Yes / No

How do you report your child's absence?

What if my child is taking prescription medicine? Non-prescription medicine?

What if I want to take my child out of his/her program for the entire summer?

What should I pack in my child's bag during the spring/summer seasons or the fall/winter seasons?
What is not allowed in my child's bag? What happens if my child runs out of diapering supplies or clothing?

What can I do to help celebrate my child's birthday? How do I find out about upcoming events or themes planned for my child's classroom?

When is the best time to talk to my child's teacher about his/her progress? How can I check on my child's progress during the day?

References: Ask each center you're considering for a list of past and present references and call them. Ask specific questions. If their child is no longer there, ask why.

Name _____ Phone# _____

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The final question to ask is:

While you're at work or school, will you feel at ease knowing your child is in this setting?