

Selecting Quality Child Care

Finding a quality child care setting for your child requires an awareness of best practices and standards that help to ensure the wellness, safety and growth of your child. Below are some tips you can use when looking for a quality program. Your local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) can also assist you in finding quality child care settings for your child. You can find your local agency at the following link

(https://www.occrra.org/documents/CCRR_Agency_List.pdf)

To Select a Quality Program

1. Talk with possible programs over the telephone. Ask about the caregiver's background (i.e. education and training) and program practices (i.e. daily schedule, philosophy, etc.). Ask for and check references and program licensing. Schedule a time to meet with those programs that seem like a good fit.
2. Meet and greet by watching the caregiver with your child. Talk about ideas on child rearing and the caregiver's experience in caring for children. Ask questions regarding daily routines, programming and family involvement.
3. One way to find a quality program is to seek a program that has or is working towards a national accreditation or state quality rating. These programs go above the required state standards by meeting higher expectations – for example, caregivers are required to attend more training, group sizes are smaller and daily programming is enhanced.

NAEYC accreditation: The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) awards accreditation to child care centers and early education programs that meet national best practice standards.

NAFCC accreditation: The National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) awards accreditation to family child care home businesses that meet national best practice standards.

COA/NAA accreditation: The Council on Accreditation (COA), through a partnership with the National Afterschool Association (NAA), awards accreditation to high quality afterschool programs.

State quality-rating systems: Step Up To Quality awards up to five stars to child care centers and family child care home businesses for meeting standards above licensing requirements.

Tips for Selecting Quality Child Care

Questions to Ask:

What type of licensure or credential does the program have?

Is the program quality-rated?

How is behavior managed in the program?

How are background checks completed and updated?

What is the program's use of television or video watching?

Do the caregivers have college-level training in the field of child development or early childhood?

How long have most of the staff been employed in the program?

What to Look for:

Caregiver qualities:

- Warm, caring, patient and creative
- Talks to, laughs with and listens to children
- Reads, plays, sings and enjoys interacting with children
- Has training and experience working with children
- Sensitive to children's feelings and needs, knows how to comfort children
- Respects yours and your child's cultural background
- Interactive and welcoming to families.

Environment and safety:

- Space is safe and free from possible hazards
- Space is clean, well lit, roomy and comfortable
- Emergency plans exist and exit drills take place
- First Aid kits are available

- First Aid trained caregivers are present at all times
- Children who become ill are cared for and isolated from the other children
- Medications are stored and given out appropriately

Program routines:

- Daily plans are in place for active and quiet play
- Meals and nap times are consistent
- Limits set for children are age appropriate

Family interaction:

- Families are asked to offer ideas and help with program planning
- Caregivers talk regularly with families about their child
- Families receive notes or are informed about special events or activities
- Family programs are set up to meet the needs of children, parents and families
- Families are welcomed and feel at ease
- Families are allowed to visit any time
- Parent handbooks are available to families

Quality Care Can Be Found in the Stars!

Families want the best child care for their children. Yet knowing exactly what to look for can be a challenge – especially for families who are choosing care for the first time. Being able to find the highest quality child care setting can impact your children's future success in school and life. The impact of quality child care and some tips you can use when looking for a quality program can be found at the following link: <http://jfs.ohio.gov/cdc/docs/SUTQParentBrochure.stm>.

More stars indicate higher quality. Child care programs participating in Step Up to Quality demonstrate a commitment to provide quality care and education. These programs go beyond the minimum standards of licensing in a variety of ways. A high quality program means: highly trained caregivers, learning experiences that prepare children for school, planning for each child's individual needs, and strong leadership.

High quality indicates better outcomes for children. Research continues to show that high-quality care and education leads to better school outcomes for children. Young children who participate in high-quality programs show enhanced social, cognitive, and language development. They are more likely to be emotionally secure and self-confident, proficient in language use, better able to manage frustrations and generally do better in school. In addition, research has shown that children who attend quality preschool are less likely to drop out of high school, require special education services or be held back a grade. They also score better on reading and math achievement tests.

By choosing a program with a high quality rating, families ensure that their children have the foundation needed for success in school and life!

The Difference Among the Stars!

One-star programs show commitment to children with this initial rating. They have met the standards for licensing which require ensuring the health and safety of children in their care. Ohio's one-star programs are required to increase their involvement with families, participate in approved specialized training, and increase focus on education and learning by identifying a program wide curriculum.

Two-star programs meet the requirements for a one-star rating plus work to enhance their environments by doing classroom assessments and evaluating caregiver/child interactions. Caregivers are also required to use lesson plans aligned to state standards and continue their early childhood training.

Three-star programs meet the requirements for a two-star rating plus implement a curriculum with written lesson plans to maximize learning. In addition, these programs use results from various assessments to develop a plan to improve classrooms and work more closely with families to create goals for children.

Four and five-star programs meet the requirements for a three-star rating plus further advance individual child outcomes through partnerships with families and community members. Additional quality advancements may include: families contributing to children's education goals, caregivers developing lesson plans that support each child's growth, lowering of staff-to-child ratios or advancing the education of staff.