

Choosing Quality Care

When you are looking for childcare, you want to find a program that is convenient, open when you need it, and within your budget. All those things are important, but most importantly, you and your child need a childcare program that makes sure your child is safe, healthy, and learning. Your childcare provider is a critical partner with you. To make sure your childcare supports your child, your family, and your ability to feel secure leaving your child, it is important to choose a high-quality childcare program. It can be hard to identify high-quality childcare. The following information is a great guideline for starting your search.

1. **Get a list of programs you are interested in.** You can also contact NH ChildCare Aware for help in this process. The link to their website is: <http://nh.childcareaware.org/>
2. **Do your homework on your potential childcare centers.** Check out the State of NH reports from Child Care Licensing. These reports will tell you when the childcare provider was visited by a state licensing agent, what types of health and safety violations the program was cited for, and how those violations were addressed. The link to the website is : <https://forms.nh.gov/licenseverification/Search.aspx?facility=>
3. **Check the accreditation the childcare center possesses.** There is a normal licensed center, a licensed plus center, and an NAEYC accredited program. Each certification holds different standards that the center must follow.
4. **Contact the childcare center to schedule a tour.** Ask pre-screening questions before you visit to make sure you are visiting providers that meet your needs.

Possible questions to ask would be:

- Does the provider have space for my child?
- What are the provider's hours of operation?
- What does the provider hold for an accreditation?
- What are the program costs?
- Are there any discounts or scholarships available?
- Does the provider participate in a childcare assistance program?

Create a list of questions that are important to you and your family. A reference to help create a list comes from ChildCare Aware of America:

<https://www.childcareaware.org/families/choosing-quality-child-care/selecting-child-care-program/child-care-center-checklist/>

5. **Take the tour.**

When touring the childcare provider, use your five senses:

SIGHT: Do you see providers engaged with children? Do you see children actively playing with each other and the provider? Do you see any health and safety concerns? Do you see that there are enough materials for the children to play with?

SOUND: Do you hear a “buzz” in the childcare setting, where teachers are talking in warm, positive tones to the children? Do you hear providers using respectful language?

TASTE: How does the eating experience appear? Is it pleasant? Are teachers engaged with children during this process? Are the children encouraged to eat their healthy meal choices?

TOUCH: Do you see physical affection between teachers and children, such as hugging, pats on the head, children sitting on provider’s laps, or any other types of positive touch?

SMELL: Is there a pleasant smell in the childcare setting? Can you smell perfume, smoke, or any other odor that might be unpleasant for your child?

Good luck in your search and well wishes to you and your family,

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Resource material comes from ChildCare Aware of America

<https://www.childcareaware.org/families/choosing-quality-child-care/starting-child-care-search/>