

CHOOSING A DAYCARE

This checklist is designed to help you screen potential caregivers. Read through the list below before visiting a home-based childcare program for things to look for and consider when making your choice. This list is not intended to be comprehensive – it's a sample of the main areas to evaluate.

Think about what is important to your family. You may want to highlight questions that are of value. Ideally, you should be able to schedule 2 or more visits with potential caregivers. Information can be gathered through observation as well as speaking with the caregiver. It's important for you to feel comfortable communicating as you will be potentially entrusting this person with your most precious and vulnerable member of your family.

The Caregiver

Does the caregiver appear to be warm and loving?

Is the caregiver sensitive to children and their needs?

Are the children listened to and talked with, not at?

Does the caregiver have a sense of humor? Is there laughter?

Does the caregiver appear happy and confident? (consider why they wouldn't be, ie newly opened)

Is the caregiver involved with the children or just directing their activities?
(consider the unique needs for the child in question, ie some kids prefer space)

Does the caregiver have training and experience in caring for children of similar age to yours?

Does the caregiver have basic first aid/CPR training?

Does the caregiver have liability insurance?

Does the caregiver have a Police Record Check? Does any family member over 18 living in the house have one?

Sara's Stepping Stones Daycare

The Health & Safety

- Are toxic substances inaccessible to children?
- Are there smoke detectors and fire extinguishers?
- Are all the stairs barricaded? (consider if they need to be)
- Are play areas and equipment clean, safe, and well maintained?
- Is the outdoor play area fenced? (consider if it needs to be)
- Are rooms clean, bright and well ventilated? Are the electrical outlets covered?
- Are facilities for food preparation clean and safe?
- Do children receive nutritious snacks and meals?
- Are meals modified for allergies if necessary? (consider if you have the option to provide your own if needed)
- Do children have a rest or naptime each day?
- Does each child have their own crib/cot/bed?
- Where do they take their rest time?

The Atmosphere

- Do the children appear happy?
- Is there a lot of laughing, hugging, caring?
- Are the children encouraged to care about and respect each other?
- Does the caregiver greet and talk with each child/parent as they arrive?
- Is there parent involvement in the program and are parents encouraged to communicate with each other?
- Is the emphasis on cooperation not competition?
- Does the caregiver's philosophy about children agree with yours?
- Are parents encouraged to visit at any time?
- Does it feel like "your kind of place"?

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The Program

Is there a consistent, clear daily routine?

Is there enough flexibility in the routine to accommodate individual children's needs and creativity?

Are there activities which encourage children to think, to be creative, to explore, to express themselves, to problem solve and to relate well to others?

Are there lots of play materials of different types? (art supplies, science experiments, sand and water play, blocks, musical instruments, dress up, books, etc.)

Are there many opportunities to enhance each child's sense of self?

Does the caregiver plan activities that recognize each child's cultural background?

Are there field trips into the community?

Do children appear to be interested and involved or bored?

The Discipline

Is the caregiver able to explain discipline policies to you?

Are they willing to consider your input?

Is discipline handled in such a way that is hurtful, frightening, intimidating or injurious to the children?

Does the caregivers' method seem age appropriate?

How are incidents involving 2 or more children handled?

What kinds of behaviour does the caregiver see as problem behaviour?

Does the caregiver explain rules clearly and reinforce positive behaviour?