



Questions for Center-Based Care

Finding a quality child care center is often more difficult than one might imagine. It can be one of the most trying tasks of being a parent. Center-based care varies greatly and must meet minimum government standards that are regulated by a local agency. Becoming familiar with these standards and educating yourself on the right questions to ask, will help you find the quality care you are looking for. Inquiring about so many details may feel uncomfortable, but open communication with providers is vital to quality care.

Use these questions, along with the regulations set forth by the state, as a guide to help you evaluate the child care facilities you visit.

Policies & Procedures

- What are your hours?
- What are your policies on late pick up and early drop off?
- Do you charge for holidays and sick days?
- What is your policy for withdrawing a child?
- Do you provide backup care?
- What days are you closed?
- What are your fees?
- Do you have an open door policy?
- Do you offer web accessed viewing of classrooms? How does this work? Is there a fee involved?
- What is the capacity of the center/classes?
- Do you offer sibling discounts?
- Is the center licensed and/or hold any special accreditation or recognition?
- What are your teacher: child ratios?
- Do you collapse your classrooms in early morning, evening, and during staff meal times? Ratios?
- What are the center's health and safety policies?
- How do you try to prevent the spread of health concerns?
- How are illnesses and accidents reported to parents?
- How are children signed in and out daily?
- Is there a policy for holidays and birthdays on what is/isn't allowed?
- What is your immunization policy and how is it kept up to date?
- How does the center maintain issues of safety concerns in areas such as playgrounds, toys, etc?
- Do you accommodate children with special needs or have inclusion classrooms?
- What meals do you provide (ask to see a menu)? Snacks?
- Can you accommodate food allergies or special diets (vegetarian)?
- What is your policy on bringing food from home?
- Do you offer field trips? (Ask to explain)
- Do you offer enrichment activities (included or additional fee)?
- What is done when children are not able to play outside (due to poor weather conditions)?
- Is there a balance of play time, story time, activity time, nap time, etc.?
- How are children assessed for appropriate projects, play, and transition?
- How are children made to feel comfortable at the center and new surroundings?

Discipline

- What is your policy on discipline?
- Do you use time outs or other methods? (Ask what they do for time out)
- How would I be informed if my child had any problems during the day?
- How do you work with parents to help solve behavioral problems?

Director/Staff

- What are the credentials and experience of your director and assistant director?
- Is there always a director or assistant director on site?
- How long have the director, assistant director, and each staff member worked there?
- How do you hire staff to work at the center?
- What is the level of training and experience of your staff?
- Are caregivers trained in CPR, First Aid, Early Childhood, and Curriculum & Assessment?
- Are the caregivers involved in continuing education programs?

Daily Routine

- Could you describe a typical day (age group appropriate)?

Selecting & Evaluating Quality Child Care

Questions for Center-Based Care

- Are there regularly scheduled staff meetings and opportunities for staff development?
- Do you have a nutritionist involved in meal planning?
- What is your turnover rate?
- Are children supervised at all times?

Diapering & Toilet Training

- What is your diapering policy?
- Do you supply diapers, ointments, wipes, etc?
- How do you assist with toilet training?

Parent Involvement

- How are parents kept current on what their child is doing in care?
- Are there parent/teacher conferences?
- Does the center have a parent council or association?
- How does the center involve parents?
- Are the director and staff available to answer parent questions?
- Do you have an area designated for nursing mothers?
- Can parents join their children for lunch?

Physical Setting/Observance

- Do you feel welcome there?
- Is the center clean, well lighted, heated, ventilated, and have ample space for each child?
- Are rooms odor free?
- Do the children sleep in cots, cribs, mats, etc?
- How often are linens cleaned?
- Is there a fenced outdoor space with a variety of equipment available?
- Is there an indoor play area?
- Is there a library of books available for the children?
- Is the children's art work displayed on the walls?
- Are there bios and photos of the staff posted by each classroom?
- Are there televisions present? If so, what are they used for?
- Are there computers present for the children to use? How is this done?
- Do the classrooms contain a variety clean, safe, and age appropriate toys?
- Is the kitchen sanitary?
- Do the children appear happy and engaged in what they are doing?

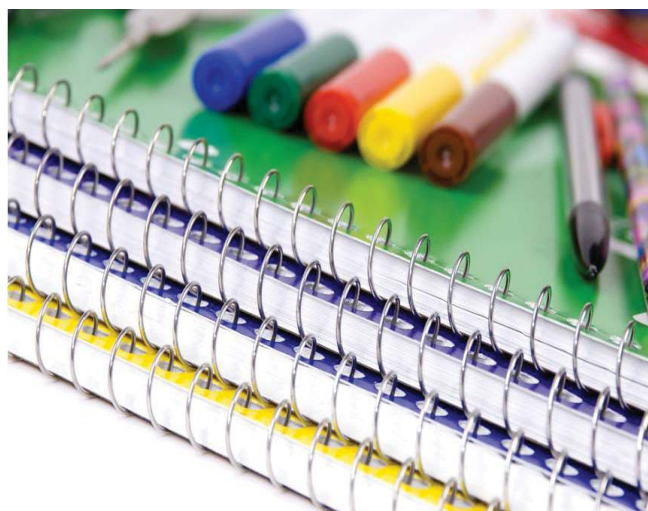
- Are the children comforted when needed?
- What type of child proofing do you see?

Curriculum

- What curriculum is used?
- Can you provide me examples of how this curriculum would look in the different classrooms?
- How are children assessed for both programming and classroom transitions?
- How is progress/concerns discussed with parents?

Please visit www.worklife.emory.edu for more information on the following topics:

- Hiring a Nanny on Your Own
- Questions to Ask When choosing a Caregiver
- Types of Child Care
- Expectant & New Parents
- School-Aged Children
- Teenagers / Adolescents
- Special Needs



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