

## **Interviewing Child Care Providers: Centers and Daycares**

### **Program Setup**

- 1) How long has the childcare program been in existence?
- 2) Is the program licensed? Registered? Accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)?
- 3) What are the hours of operation?
- 4) Are there maximum or minimum hours required for enrollment?
- 5) What is the program cost? When are fees due and how does the provider prefer that fees be paid?
- 6) Are there additional fees such as late pick-up fees, activity fees, etc.?
- 7) What is the admission policy? Application procedure?
- 8) Is there a waiting list? If so, how long? When can I expect my child to be able to enroll?
- 9) Do siblings of children already in the program have priority when they apply?
- 10) What is the holiday or vacation schedule?
- 11) Are parents charged when the child is ill or on vacation? (Some centers provide vacation and sick credits.)
- 12) Are meals provided or do parents bring meals from home? If meals are provided, what types of meals are they? Inquire about food preparation.
- 13) Are children taken on field trips? If so, at what age does this begin? How many adults attend?
- 14) What is the program's sick policy (for example, when do they send a child home for illness)?
- 15) How much notice is required to leave the program (most centers require at least 2 weeks)?
- 16) Does the center provide a list of references for interested families? If so, get some names, including at least one family with a child currently enrolled, and call references.

### **Care and Providers**

- 1) How many children are in care? What are their ages?
- 2) How are children of different ages grouped?
- 3) How many children are in each group? What is the adult-child ratio for each group?
- 4) What are the requirements for hiring providers (experience and education, CPR certification, etc.)? For individual providers, what is their background and experience?
- 5) How does the center work to prevent high turnover of staff?
- 6) What is the average length of tenure of staff?
- 7) What kind of background checks and health screenings (TB) are done with staff and anyone with direct access to and responsibility for the children?
- 8) Does the center provide opportunities for continuing education for its teachers and staff?
- 9) What happens when a teacher is ill or on vacation? How does the center cover their absence?

### **Parent Involvement**

- 1) Is parent participation required or encouraged? If so, how much?
- 2) Does the program welcome parents' ideas? In what ways can parents get involved?
- 3) Are parents welcome to drop in unannounced at any time?
- 4) Does the program offer parent-teacher conferences? How often?
- 5) How else are parents kept informed of their child's progress?
- 6) What is the procedure for contacting parents in the event of an emergency?

### **Philosophy**

1. What is the program's philosophy on children's learning?
2. Is there a planned curriculum? If so, ask for examples.
3. What is the usual daily routine?
4. Are there different learning activities for varying developmental stages, interests, and abilities?
5. Can a child choose from different activities?
6. Are there opportunities for children to play alone and in small groups?
7. Will the children ever watch television or videos? If so, what programs and for how long each day?
8. How are children disciplined?
9. How are children comforted?

10. Can a child bring a special object from home (blanket, doll, etc.) to help with separation from parents?
11. What are the program guidelines about toilet training? Will they take children who are not yet toilet trained?

**Facility**

- 1) Are there separate areas for food preparation and diaper changing?
- 2) How often is the space cleaned?
- 3) Is there a separate space for children to wash their hands?
- 4) What are the sleeping/resting arrangements?
- 5) Where do children eat?
- 6) What supplies does the program provide and what does the parent need to keep stocked at school (diapers, wipes, changes of clothing, etc.)
- 7) Does each child have a separate space in which to keep supplies?
- 8) What is the plan for children in case of emergency? Ask to see the emergency route.
- 9) Is there a sign-in/-out sheet? How are children accounted for each day?
- 10) How is the facility kept secure to prevent strangers from entering and having access to the children?
- 11) Can the staff see the entire playground at all times?

# Interviewing Child Care Providers: Nannies, AuPairs, In-Home/Family-Home Care

## Provider Background

- 1) How long has the provider been caring for children?
- 2) What is the provider's educational background? Do they have current CPR/first aid certification?
- 3) What ages does the provider like to care for?
- 4) Why does the provider want this job?
- 5) What does the provider like about this kind of work?
- 6) What is challenging for the provider about this work?
- 7) What was the provider's last job and why did they leave?
- 8) What is the provider's fee, how do they like to be paid, and when?
- 9) Does the provider drive? If not, how will they get to work?
- 10) Does the provider have children of their own? How many? How old?
- 11) Does the provider have a list of references for interested families?

## Care

- 1) What does the provider like to do with a child at age \_\_\_? (Ask about several ages since your child might be with this provider for a while.)
- 2) How will the provider play with a child at age \_\_\_?
- 3) What are the provider's feelings about breastfeeding? (If you are planning to express milk, you need someone supportive of your choice.)
- 4) What would the provider do if a child were bleeding?
- 5) What would the provider do if a child drank or ate a poisonous substance?
- 6) What would the provider do if a child had a high fever and the provider couldn't reach a parent?
- 7) What would the provider do if a child were choking?
- 8) How would the provider handle a child who refused to take a nap?
- 9) What would the provider do if a child hit or bit her?
- 10) How does the provider comfort children?
- 11) Will the provider cook for the child?
- 12) How much TV would the provider let the child(ren) watch and what types of programs?
- 13) What is the provider's philosophy on toilet training?

## Miscellaneous

- 1) How many hours of work per week does the provider require at a minimum? Maximum?
- 2) During what hours is the provider willing to keep your child?
- 3) Will the provider (nanny/au pair) do light housework when the child is napping?
- 4) (Specify what you mean by "light" housework.)
- 5) What holidays would the provider expect to take off? How much vacation time will the provider want?
- 6) If the provider will be transporting your child(ren), inquire about their driving record.
- 7) How long will the provider be able to keep your child (until what age)?
- 8) Will the provider sign a contract? (This is wise in any business transaction.)

## Ask the following if an in-home shared or family home situation:

- 1) Has the provider cared for more than one child at a time before?
- 2) What does the provider see as the challenges of caring for more than one child?
- 3) How will the provider help two fussy children settle down for nap?
- 4) How will the provider support two children who are both crying?
- 5) How does the provider handle illnesses when working with several children?
- 6) How does the provider handle conflicts between children?
- 7) How does the provider support the interests of children with varying developmental needs? Ask for examples.

## Checklist for Child Care Center Tour

### Location

Is the location convenient to home or work?

### The Program

- Is there a balance of daily activities?
- Are the activities age-appropriate?
- Are children given individual attention?
- Can children get things for themselves?
- Are nutritious meals and snacks offered?
- Are children given the opportunity to be creative?

### Staff-Child Interaction

- Does the staff respond quickly when children need assistance?
- Do they participate with children in activities?
- Is there an appropriate number of staff for the number of children present?
- Do staff seem interested in communicating with parents?
- Do the children show affection for the staff, and do they seem comfortable with them?
- Do staff seem to enjoy their work?
- Are they smiling and using friendly voice tones?
- Are the children engaged in activities?

### Facility

- Is the center clean and free from odor?
- Do children have separate sleeping areas, and is bedding laundered?
- Are there exits to the outside from each room?
- Is there adequate space for the children?
- Is the environment bright and cheerful?
- Are there fire extinguishers and smoke detectors in each room?
- Does the equipment appear safe and in good repair?
- Are all areas self-contained so children cannot wander off?

## Family Home Tour Check List

### Location

Is the location convenient to home or work?

### The Program

- Is there a well-organized schedule for each child?
- Are the activities age-appropriate?
- Are children given individual attention?
- Are specific rooms available to the children?
- Are nutritious meals and snacks offered?
- Are children given the opportunity for creative play?

### Provider-Child Interaction

- Does the provider seem to respond quickly when children need assistance?
- Does the provider participate with children in activities?
- Are there an appropriate number of children for the provider to safely care for?
- Does the provider seem interested in communicating with you?
- Do the children show affection for the provider, and do they seem comfortable with her?
- Does the provider seem to enjoy her work?
- Does the provider show respect to the children (voice tone, eye contact)?
- Are the children engaged in activities besides watching TV?

### Home Environment

- Is the provider's house clean and free from odor?
- Do children have separate sleeping areas, and is bedding laundered?
- Is the neighborhood acceptable to you?
- Is there adequate space for the children?
- Are there fire extinguishers and smoke detectors in the home?
- Are first aid supplies available?
- Is there a safe, fenced outdoor play area?
- Is the provider's home "baby-proofed"?

### Transportation

Is the provider's transportation safe and reliable?

## Child Care Internet Resource List

**National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care:**

<http://nrc.uchsc.edu> -- this site will allow you to access your state's child care licensure regulations for both family home care and day care centers, as well as other regulations regarding child care.

**The National Child Care Information Center:** <http://nccic.org> -- this Web site provides parents with a list of state child care regulatory offices.

**Child Care Online:** [www.childcare.net](http://www.childcare.net) -- comprehensive childcare and caregiver site that provides a variety of resource information regarding daycare and childcare issues.

**Parents Action for Children** (Formerly known as "I Am Your Child"):

<http://www.iamyourchild.org> -- Provides information on child development from infancy to age 3.

**National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education:**

[www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/ECI](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/ECI) -- Provides parent information, parenting pamphlets, and links to the Department of Education and other federal sites for children.

**National Network for Child Care:** [www.nncc.org](http://www.nncc.org) -- this site offers publications and resources related to child care, support and assistance from experts in child care and child development, and newsletters.