

## **Child Care Checklist**

Use for each program you visit.

Program Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Director/Provider Name \_\_\_\_\_

Schedule/Hours \_\_\_\_\_

—

Cost \_\_\_\_\_

### **Visiting the Program**

**When visiting a program be sure to...**

- Go without your child for the initial visit.
- Allow plenty of time to observe in the classroom as well as speak with the teacher or director.
- Visit during the program's active time of the day-usually the morning.
- When observing in the classroom remember to "watch" quietly and to sit at your child's eye level so you can see how things will look from his/her perspective - not yours!

#### **Here are some things you may want to think about**

- Are the hours suitable for my needs?
- Is the program in a convenient location?
- Is the program affordable?

#### **Does the program agree with my own philosophies about:**

- behavior management
- expectations for behavior and performance on tasks
- toileting
- food
- religion
- values around differing cultures, languages or genders.

#### **Teachers/Providers**

The nature of interactions between adults and children is the best indicator of quality for any child care program. In a high quality child care program teachers will interact with children frequently and will show interest, respect and understanding of children's work and their behavior - even when they are not

cooperating!

### **Things to Look for...**

- values around differing cultures, languages or genders.
- Are the teachers actively engaged with the children and showing interest in what they're doing?
- Do the teachers appear to enjoy being with the children?
- Do the teachers speak with children at their eye level?
- Do the teachers speak in a calm, respectful, and positive tone of voice?  Can the teachers describe for you what a typical day would be like for your child?

### **Space**

A high quality child care program will design its space in order to reflect the interests and needs of the children it serves. It will provide appropriate materials, toys and areas to stimulate learning and independent exploration. Be sure to observe the space while children are present!

### **Things to Look For...**

- Is there adequate space for the children to move around freely?
- Is the space safe, well maintained and relatively clean?
- Is the space inviting to children - could you imagine your child spending a day there?
- Is the space divided up into different "interest areas" such as a reading corner, art areas with easels and other materials, dress-up area, block building area, science center, play kitchen, and sand and water tables?
- Does the space have a "soft" area or places for your child to go to when they need to take a break from the group?
- Is there adequate outdoor space and is the equipment appropriate and safe for your age child?

### **The Program**

A high-quality child care program designs its schedule and activities to stimulate children's learning as well as meet the varying needs of children throughout the day.

### **Things to Look For...**

- Are children actively involved in hands-on activities?
- Do the children appear happy and engaged in their play?
- Can the teacher/provider explain what activities are offered and how these are designed to help children learn and develop?

- Does the program have a predictable daily schedule?
- Does it allow children both active and quiet times of the day?
- Does it offer a balance of planned activities as well as free play for the children?
- Does it ensure that children get plenty of time outside to do large muscle activities like running, jumping and climbing?

### **Parent Involvement**

A high-quality program will welcome the presence of parents and will respect and encourage their input.

### **Things to Look For...**

- Does the director/provider appear interested in learning about your individual child and hearing your perspective?
- Are there scheduled parent/teacher conferences during the year?
- Are parents welcome to visit the program at any time?
- Are parents encouraged to participate in program activities and events?
- Do you feel comfortable and enjoy talking with the director/provider?

### **CHILD CARE FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

The State of Massachusetts requires that child centers accept applications for all children, regardless of the type or severity of their disability.

The child care provider, together with the child's parents, will make the determination if any special accommodations are necessary for the child to participate. In some cases, it may be determined that participation would cause an "undue burden" (often financially) on the program.

For more information on your rights as a parent and guidelines for determining program acceptance, contact the Department of Early Education & Care at 617-472-2881.

### **PARENT COMMENTS**

THINGS I LIKE ABOUT THIS PROGRAM

## THINGS I DON'T LIKE ABOUT THIS PROGRAM

## QUESTIONS I NEED TO ASK

### **Making the Big Decision...**

Every child care program that you visit will have advantages and disadvantages. It is important to visit as many programs as you can in order to get a better feel for what's out there and a clearer sense of what kind of a program is right for you. Making that final decision can often be difficult as you consider your needs, feelings, and possibly the opinions of others. Please remember that it's your decision. What works for one family may not work for another.

A child care provider should make you feel comfortable with how he/she plans to keep your child safe, stimulated and well-cared for. If for any reason during a visit you feel that something is just "not right," follow your instincts - only you can decide what's right for your child.

### **Watch out for Red Flags!**

- The teacher/director/provider cannot adequately answer your questions.
  - The teachers are not engaged with the children.
  - You are not encouraged to visit the program and ask questions.
  - You observe something an adult said or did that makes you feel uncomfortable or upset. *(Don't be afraid to ask a director/provider for an explanation-you may be surprised and relieved by their answer)*
-