

5 Steps to Choosing Quality Childcare

- 1. LOOK:** Think about your first impressions, but also take the time to watch how the provider interacts with the children; notice the kinds of toys and learning materials that are available; and think about how safe the environment is for children. Once you have narrowed down your child care choices, return for a second visit and stay as long as possible in order to get a true feel for the provider and the facility.
- 2. LISTEN:** Observe how the children play together and listen for sounds of laughter and involvement. How do the teachers speak to the children? Facilities that are too quiet or noisy might be cause for concern.
- 3. COUNT:** How many children are there compared to the number of teachers? The smaller the number of children there are for each adult, the more one-on-one attention your child will be able to receive. Infants and toddlers especially need an adult who is not trying to tend to too many children at once.
- 4. ASK:** During your interview with the director, inquire about the education level and background of the teachers working there. Find out if the program is accredited and if the teachers are involved in ongoing professional development. Caregivers working in high-quality settings will be happy to answer these questions.
- 5. BE INFORMED:** Find out more about ongoing efforts in your community to improve the quality of child care. Is the caregiver involved in these efforts? How can you get involved?