Finding quality child care A guide for parents in Canada



Health and safety

- [ ] (In a centre or other regulated setting) - The license is posted in a visible place
- [ ] The centre/home is clean and in good repair.
- [ ] Doors to outside or to unsafe areas (e.g. a garage or parking area) are secure
- [ ] Balconies are locked and off limits, there are gates on stairwells and windows are securely fastened
- [ ] Staff/caregivers and children wash their hands before meals and after toileting or diapering
- [ ] Toys are disinfected on a regular basis (daily for infants and toddlers)
- [ ] There are clear routines in case of an emergency such as fire, evacuation or accident
- [ ] Procedures about children's allergies (such as food) are clearly stated and observed
- [ ] There are clear routines for giving children needed medications at child care
- [ ] Cleaning products, medications or implements are stored safely
- [ ] If meals are provided, menus are posted, and the food is nutritious and appealing
- [ ] When children leave the premises (to go to the library or park, for example), they are well supervised
- [ ] Outdoor space is clean, well-maintained and available
- [ ] Cribs/ playpens and other equipment meet current safety standards
- [ ] Each child has his/her own crib (infants/toddlers), cot and/or bedding/pillow/blanket for sleeping
- [ ] Staff/caregiver has up-to-date first aid training (CPR is desirable)

- [ ] Parents are aware of the presence and roles of all adults on the child care premises (including family members)
- [ ] The number of children in the home/group/room (at a minimum) meets the provincial / territorial standard

Environment, materials and programming

- [ ] Parents are regularly provided with information about the daily schedule and programming, as well as about their child's day and activities
- [ ] (If the child care setting is multi-age): There are activities, equipment and materials suited to children of different ages
- [ ] Children have access to a variety of kinds of age-appropriate equipment and materials
- [ ] Activities emphasize play and exploration through group and individual activities
- [ ] Children have considerable opportunity for active play, much of it outdoors.
- [ ] The child care environment is set up in a safe, accessible and interesting way (for example, children can use materials freely)
- [ ] Children are not overly controlled or programmed; at the same time, they are not wandering around aimlessly
- [ ] Children are engaged with the materials and environment, they look busy, content and relaxed.
- [ ] There are displays of children's work and documentation of activities
- [ ] Diversity – racial, ethnic, gender, ability – is well represented in materials, visually and in programming.
- [ ] The space is organized to make transitions (from indoors to outdoors, or from active play to lunchtime) smooth
- [ ] There is a welcoming, warm atmosphere for parents
- [ ] There is at most limited use of TV or other passive technology

Staff/caregiver

- [ ] Staff/caregivers have education or training related to working with young children; at a minimum, provincial/territorial training requirements are met by the centre or home
- [ ] The staff/caregiver engages in professional development or information sharing with others in early childhood education on an ongoing basis
- [ ] Staff/caregivers can provide a police reference check. (this is likely to be a requirement in a centre or regulated home setting)
- [ ] In a home setting, caregivers can provide references
- [ ] Staff/caregivers have a clearly defined approach to education and caring
- [ ] Staff/caregivers treat children with respect, listen to them and respond to them sensitively
- [ ] Staff/caregivers encourage co-operation, problem-solving and independence in the children
- [ ] Staff/ caregiver welcomes parents into the child care environment at any time; there is an "open door" policy
- [ ] There is a plan for staff/caregiver replacement in the event of their illness or other absence
- [ ] (In a centre): Staff communicate with each other in a positive and respectful manner (the program seems to have a good working environment)

- [ ] (In a centre): All staff (and practicum students, if they are present) are acknowledged and introduced to visitors in a respectful way

Overall program

- [ ] A policy manual or policy document is available to parents
- [ ] Goals and objectives for children and parents are articulated
- [ ] Parents are involved or consulted about the program or other aspects of the child care
- [ ] If children with special needs are enrolled: Is the approach fully inclusive ?

Good to know...

- [ ] Is the child care centre a not-for-profit organization? For-profit? Publicly-operated? Who's responsible for it – A parent board? A community board? A municipal government? An owner? A company? If there is a "head office", where is it?
- [ ] How often, and how, are parents expected to participate in centre or home activities?
- [ ] What are the hours of operation?
- [ ] How much are the fees? When are fees due? Are receipts issued for payment of fees?
- [ ] Is there an extra charge for bringing a child early or arriving later than usual to pick up the child?
- [ ] Can the centre/home accept fee subsidies from the provincial/territorial government?
- [ ] Is there a deposit (to be on the waiting list?) ? If so, is it refundable?
- [ ] (In a family child care home): Is it supported by a family child care agency or regularly inspected by the provincial/territorial government (i.e. is the child care home regulated)?

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