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Selecting A Quality Infant/Toddler Child Care Center

Finding quality care for your infant/toddler is a very important task. This information will help you solve the puzzle for you and your family. Download [a brochure and checklist](#) to take with you when you visit a potential child care center.

Consider. Licensing by the State of Ohio or Kentucky is required for child care centers. If within Cincinnati city limits, it must also be licensed by the City. Licensing establishes minimum health and safety standards. Licensing, however, does not insure quality. You should expect more than the minimum standards that licensing requires.

Call. Call several centers to find out hours and days in session, cost of the program, its location and proximity to your home or work. Tuition assistance may be available. Be sure to ask. Make appointments with the ones that sound most promising.

Visit and Evaluate. Visit two or three centers while the children are there. Spend at least one hour in the classroom and extra time talking with the director. If possible, do not bring your child on your first visit to the center. It is easier to observe if you are not distracted by your child's presence and needs. Following are characteristics of a good program. Place a check for each yes answer.

Environment

- A safe, well-maintained pleasant place for children
- Cozy areas that are made with soft materials
- A combination of carpeted and tiled floors for a variety of experiences
- Space for each child's belongings, including a change of clothing
- Refrigerator nearby for storage of formula and bottles
- Low protective barriers to separate walking infants from those playing on the floor
- Furniture and outdoor play equipment for toddlers
- A safe outdoor play area, both shaded and open
- Opportunities for digging in sand and for water play

Staff

- Warm, nurturing, friendly, accepting and patient adults
- Director and head teacher with college level training in early childhood education
- Caregivers with training and experience working with infants and toddlers
- Talk to, laugh with and listen to children
- Comfort an angry, sad or frightened child in a loving, supportive way
- Experts recommend one adult caregiver for every four infants (birth to 18 months) and every six toddlers (18 months to three years)
- Discipline handled in a sensitive, positive way, respecting each child's feelings

Sleeping Routines

- A separate crib or cot for each child
- Sheets, pads and blankets changed and laundered daily or more often as needed
- Children allowed to nap according to their own needs
- Quiet, darkened and separate nap areas
- Soothing attention to children as they fall asleep

Play

- Infants, when not asleep, are out of the crib, with sufficient room to move about, see a variety of colors, shapes and objects, listen to music and other sounds, and play with interesting materials
- Caregivers play with, sing to, hold, and cuddle each child often throughout the day
- Variety of art materials, toys, games, musical instruments and things to climb on
- Materials and equipment in good condition on low shelves
- Walkers, high chairs with seat belts, infants seats and strollers
- Children choosing their own activities and toys most of the time
- A posted schedule that reflects planning for the experiences that will be offered each day

Feeding Routines

- Babies held during bottle feeding
- Fed according to their needs and individual schedules
- Bottles refrigerated until needed, and used promptly

- Left-over formulas discarded at the end of the day
- Labeled bottles with the child's name and the date prepared
- Babies and toddlers encouraged to feed themselves
- Well-balanced, nutritious meals
- Finger foods for infants and young toddlers
- Pleasant and sociable mealtimes

Parent Communications

- Planned programs for parents
- Parents participating in the classroom or eating with their children
- Notes to parents concerning their infant's eating, sleeping and eliminating schedules for each day
- Parents informed of any special activities, visitors or trips
- Parents make suggestions about menus, activities and program
- A parent newsletter and bulletin board
- Regularly scheduled parent conferences

Diapering and Toileting Routines

- Diapering/toilet areas clean, free from odor, well-ventilated and removed from the feeding area
- Diapers changed without delay after they are soiled
- Babies thoroughly cleaned after the dirty diaper is removed
- Dirty diapers disposed of in a closed separate, sanitary container
- Changing table with secure strap which holds the baby safely, and which is used every time
- Changing table surface disinfected after each baby is changed
- Caregivers' hands washed thoroughly after changing each baby's diaper
- Toileting begins only when the child is physically ready, interested and able to understand the process of using the toilet
- Parents involved in the decision to begin toilet training for their children
- Toilet training as a positive, pleasant part of toddler's day
- Toileting accidents treated casually rather than with anger and disappointment

Safety and Health

- Written policy prohibiting sick children from attending the center
- Up-to-date state license (and city license, if required), displayed and free from any provisional restrictions
- Accessible first aid kits in the classroom
- A first-aid trained staff member at the center at all times

Warning Signals

- The center does not encourage parents to observe.
- The children move about without any guidance or direction for 30 minutes or more.
- The staff spend most of their time scolding or ordering the children

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4C, serving 23 counties in Ohio and Kentucky, [helps parents](#) find quality child care, [educates and supports](#) early childhood educators and caregivers, [recruits family child care providers](#), and [advocates](#) for young children and their families. Central Office: 1924 Dana Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45207 | 800-256-1296

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