

Parent Information

Choosing the type of Care and Interviewing Prospective Providers-

In looking for child care, a parent needs to make many decisions. First you will need to decide if you want to use licensed or unlicensed family care, whether you want to use a child care center, a nanny to come into your home, a latchkey program, a sitter, etc.

To decide what type of care to choose, you should take a look at what your child's needs are as well as your beliefs. Does your child need a lot of stimulation, do they need to be held and rocked, do you want them in a home setting, do you need someone who can be flexible or do you have longer hours that a center would be better able to accommodate? Does your child adapt to different caregivers or do they need a lot of consistency.

Following is a list of some types of care that are available to you to choose from.

Unlicensed Care:

If you choose someone who is unlicensed to do care, you should see that they are following the exception to being licensed; which is as follows. In Minnesota a person may do unlicensed care if they care for relatives and one family. **This includes the caregiver's own children.**

- A person cannot do unlicensed care if they have applied for child care and found that there is a disqualifier on someone in the home or if they have been denied a license or had their license revoked or their license is currently suspended or immediately suspended. **You can check if a person has been denied a license or had their license revoked, suspended or immediately suspended by calling your county's social service licensing department.**
- If a person is caring for more children and is doing so illegally, you may have your child care disrupted by the fact that they may be cited for illegal child care. This could cause a problem in looking for alternative care without having the time to choose carefully as well as being a disruption to your child. Using illegal unlicensed care is risky and ill-advised.

Licensed Child Care:

All licensed family child care providers go through a background study where the local police and state Bureau of Criminal records have been checked for the last 5 years, according to where the provider lived. A social services record check has also been completed on the provider to check if there are any adult or child abuse and neglect records. These studies are completed on anyone 13 years of age, or older, working or living in the child care residence.

The provider needs to follow through with the [State regulations](#) for licensure. These rules set limits on the number and ages of children allowed in care, set safety regulations regarding the physical environment, sanitation and health, water, food, and nutrition, set guidelines and limits regarding behavior guidance and activities and equipment, regulate the caregiver qualifications and training needed, regulates forms needed on children, reporting laws, and negative licensing actions that may take place with a license. The provider is monitored through the County Social Service Agency of residence.

As a parent you have access to public information in a provider's file. Public information consists of whether a person is licensed or not, whether there was any negative action on a license, any variances that the caregiver is operating with, the nature and outcome of complaints, and correction orders that have been issued on a licensed family child care home. To access the public information, contact the licensing unit and speak to the social worker assigned

Child care centers:

Child Care Centers in Minnesota are licensed through the Dept. Of Human Services licensing division. That number is 651-296-3971. You may contact this department to check on correction orders that may have been issued, whether there has been any negative action taken on the license, and whether there are any complaints about a particular center.

Nanny services

Nanny services are not regulated in Minnesota. There is one Nanny Program offered at Red Wing Community College.

Sitters:

There is no regulation of sitters who you may have come into your home. Local highschool and middle schools may offer some type of program to help prepare a student to babysit. Check with your local schools to see if they offer this service.

Setting Up The Interview

You will need to do a preliminary screening of caregivers or facilities. If choosing licensed care, you should contact the agency that handles the type of care you are looking for. You will want to check if there are any complaints and what was found during investigation. Check to see what kind of correction orders have been written and what corrections have been made. See if there has been any type of negative action on the license.

Your first interview will be over the phone. You will need to tell the person the age of your child, the type of schedule you have and the date you need to start .

You will want to ask about the following:

- References
- The number of years of experience (For centers, how long they have been in business) (If choosing a center, you will want to know how long the teaching staff has been with the program.)
- The ages and number of children they are currently caring for and how many children they intend to care for. (For centers you will want to know the staff child ratio and what the maximum number of children will be in each group)
- The training they have completed
- Fees and hours of operations
- The type of program they offer
- Personal concerns such as pets, smoking, special needs or dietary requirements

You will need to schedule an interview where you can discuss the program and concerns that you have regarding your child's childcare. This should be handled at a time where both you and the provider are free to discuss any issues.

There are several items you will be checking at the interview and you may want to break them up and discuss the similar issues. You should also ask to go through the home and look at the areas children will have access to.

Caregiver

- Why did you go into child care?

- What do you try to accomplish with the children?
- How long do you envision yourself doing child care?
- What do you like most about being a child care provider?
- Describe what a typical day would be for my child.

Business Policies

- Are there written policies?
- When are the fees collected?
- Is there a late fee?
- In what form can payment be made (cash, check, credit card)?
- Are you issued a receipt?
- Do you pay for holidays?
- Sick Policy: Do you pay for days you child is sick? Do they take sick children? What happens when the provider or family member is sick?
- Vacation: Do you pay when you take vacation? Do you pay when the provider takes vacation?
- Are you given a copy of a contract?

Health and Safety issues

- Is the environment reasonably clean?
- Are there any hazards in the areas where children will be?
- Is the outdoor play area free from hazards and animal waste?
- Is the yard fenced? Why or why not?
- How does the provider handle a child getting hurt in her care?
- Is the provider certified for CPR and first aid?
- Is there adequate first aid items?
- How does a provider handle a fire or tornado drill?
- What is the medication procedure for prescription and over the counter medications?
- Is the setting cheerful, well lit and well ventilated?
- Are there smoke detectors and fire extinguishers?
- Is there adequate bedding for sleeping and is the sleep area safe?
- Are the furnishings in good repair?

- How will the provider supervise a group of children of varying ages?
- Where do children eat?
- Where do children sleep?
- What meals and snacks are served? Give an example. How is meal time handled?

Behavior Guidance and Self Esteem

- What methods do/does the caregiver/s use to encourage positive behavior?
- How does the caregiver handle the different ages and stages of development?
- Are children encouraged to find positive solutions to conflicts and frustration?
- Are limits set with consistent reinforcement?
- How is problem-solving and personal expression encouraged?
- Is the provider available to intervene if a child's behavior becomes unruly?
- How does the provider encourage children to use words to express their feelings to each other?
- How does the provider encourage children to participate?
- How is individual attention given to each child?

Program or Activities

- What types of activities are provided for the various age groups?
- Are materials and shelves accessible to the children?
- How much space is available for children's activities?
- Are children allowed to explore?
- Is there a mixture of activities offered? ie. A mix of free play and structured activities, quiet and active, large and small muscle , individual and group activities.
- Is there a mixture of indoor and outdoor activities?
- Are there a variety of age-appropriate play materials available?

Communication

- How will the provider let you know what is happening each day?
- Are parents encouraged to visit during the day?
- What would the provider do if you disagreed with them on an issue?

Infants/Toddlers in Care

- What will the child sleeping in?

- How is the infant's environment protected to allow them to explore?
- How often does the provider change diapers?
- Where are diapers changed and what is the disinfecting procedure?
- How is toilet training handled?
- How does the caregiver feel about bottles, pacifiers, stuffed animals, security blankets?
- How does the provider handle feedings and meals?
- How often would the caregiver allow an infant/toddler to cry before picking them up?
- What does the caregiver think a baby needs from them at this age?
- How often will she hold the infant/toddler?

Viewing The Program in Operation

Now it is time to schedule a visit where you can view the caregiver and children interacting. You should schedule a visit during the times the child care is normally operating. You will want to pay close attention to the following:

- How are children greeted upon arrival?
- Does the caregiver use positive language when discussing issues with children?
- Do the children seem happy?
- Does the caregiver hold, talk and listen to the children, and give the children assistance when needed?
- Is the caregiver involved with the children and their play or are they busy seeing to other things?
- Does the caregiver seem loving to the children?
- How does the provider help children handle transitioning between various activities?
- What happens when a child acts out toward other children?
- Does the caregiver respond quickly to children's signs of distress?
- Are children helped to find positive ways to deal with conflicts and frustrations?
- Are there chances for children to feel important?
- Does the caregiver supervise young children closely?
- Is independence encouraged and are children allowed to make choices?
- Are children treated respectfully?
- Is the setting comfortable for children?
- Is the environment safe so that children can explore freely?

- Is the noise level something your child would be comfortable with?
- Is there enough space for children to move around in freely?
- Is there a quiet space for children to be alone or work in small groups?
- Are there enough toys for children to have choices?
- Is the equipment safe for children?
- Is there adequate equipment and activities so children are not bored?
- Is the television on during the day? If so how often is it on and what programs are viewed?
- Does the caregiver wash hands after diapering, wiping noses, and before handling food?
- Does the caregiver see that children wash their hands after toileting and before eating?
- If there are pets, how is the interaction handled between the pet and the children? Are they closely supervised when they are together or does the pet have free run of the environment?
- How is outdoor play handled?

After The Decision Is Made

Once your choice for childcare has been made, you should schedule a time for your child to be at the daycare setting for a short period of time to see how they will handle this new experience. You should plan to spend some time during these trial periods so you can further observe how the caregiver will handle things. If during this time you observe anything that makes you feel uneasy, you should talk to the provider to see if any changes can be made. If you feel uneasy, you may want to reconsider your arrangement.

When you have found a child care setting that you like, you should drop in when not expected, to make sure that things you have observed previously are continuing. Once you feel comfortable about your child care arrangement, it is best to keep to your usual schedule so children will adjust and not be confused.

The Ongoing Relationship

It is extremely important to continue monitoring how your child's arrangement is progressing. You need to be aware of how your child feels about going to child care, remembering that there are certain stages your child will go through where they may have a hard time with your separation from them. When you arrive to pick up your child, you will want to see that they are happy in the child care setting and that they are well supervised.

Creating a positive relationship between you and the caregiver and between the caregiver and your child is very important to having quality child care. Communication between parents and caregivers is a key to good child care. If you find something that you feel uncomfortable about, discuss the issue with your child's caregiver. . Remember to discuss any concern you have as nothing can be worked on if it is not expressed. Do not think the caregiver will just know when you're upset!

You should be able to arrange a time when you can discuss the issue without your child being present and over-hearing what is being said. Your caregiver should also feel comfortable to come to you regarding your child's behavior or issues that may arise. It is important to look at what is

best for your child and the other children in care and come to a solution that both you and the caregiver are comfortable with. If your caregiver is not willing to work on solutions to care or you feel that your child may be hurt or neglected in the arrangements they are in, you should follow your own instincts and look for alternate care. If you have complaints or concerns regarding your child's care and the caregiver is a licensed facility or home, you should report this to your County [Social workers](#) or State Licensing agency.

If you have a problem with business issues or policies, this should be addressed remembering that your caregiver may have certain set policies that will not change. If you do not feel you can abide by these policies, you should check for alternate childcare so that neither you nor the caregiver will be unhappy with your arrangement. It is important to recognize that your caregiver is operating a business and they may also have to follow regulations.