

## **Childcare Checklist**

A major concern for many new moms, especially those who are planning to go back to work, is what to do about childcare. If possible, it's wise to begin making childcare plans before your baby arrives. This will give you time to explore different options. You'll be more comfortable interviewing caregivers when you're not rushed, and you'll be less tempted to make a quick decision. Knowing that you've picked a good caregiver can help to set your mind at ease after your baby is born. The list below can help you know what to ask and what to look for when evaluating childcare options.

### **General Questions**

- Have other parents recommended this childcare option?
- Is the program licensed? For how many children?
- Is the license posted along with the last inspection? If not, ask to see them both.
- How many children are enrolled? What are their ages?
- Ratio — what is the ratio of children to caregivers?
- Is there a written contract or written policy?
- What are the vacation and sick day policies and schedules?
- What is the total cost, including all fees?

### **The Caregivers**

- What type of training do the caregivers have? Are they involved in continuing education programs?
- Are the caregivers trained in First Aid and CPR?
- Are provisions made when caregivers are ill or absent?
- Do the caregivers appear to genuinely enjoy interacting with the children?
- Do the caregivers talk to children at their eye level and play on the floor with them?
- Do the caregivers greet children by name?
- Do the caregivers listen attentively to the children and talk with them in a positive manner?
- Are the children's needs met quickly, even when things are busy?
- Do you agree with the discipline used by the caregivers?

### **The Setting**

- Is the environment clean and safe?
- Is there enough space indoors and out for a variety of activities?

- Are there a variety of activities available for the children at their eye-level?
- Is the atmosphere bright and cheerful?
- Are there areas for quiet and active pursuits?
- Is the outdoor play space fenced and completely visible to caregivers?
- Do children seem happy and content?

### **Activities/Programs**

- Are there appropriate activities for each age group?
- Are there safe clean toys and learning materials for each age group within the children's reach?
- How is the day planned? Are there scheduled times for certain activities throughout the day?
- Is there a balance of active and quiet experiences?

### **Parent's Role**

- How are parents encouraged to be involved?
- How is communication maintained between parents and caregivers?
- Are parents' concerns respected?
- Would you feel good leaving your child there?

### **Specifics You Should See With Infant Care Settings**

- Caregivers who hold, rock, soothe and sing to, repeat sounds, and cuddle infants individually
- Infants being held while being bottle-fed
- Infant has his or her own crib
- Soft, safe surfaces available for crawling, rolling, creeping, pulling up
- Caregivers who sing, talk to, and play with infants during routine care, and explain what is happening
- Adults who respond quickly to crying
- Individual sleeping and feeding schedules are maintained
- Adults who respect individual infants temperament and tolerance for sounds and activities
- Infants being taken outdoors for walks and fresh air, weather permitting
- A variety of safe, washable toys that respond to infant actions — bells, rattles, busy box, etc. — are available

- Adults encouraging infants to develop independence, for example, finger feeding
- Mirrors, photos of infants and their families, pictures at babies' eye level
- Strict precautions taken to prevent the spread of diseases — hand washing, disinfecting toys, diapering and feeding surfaces, refrigeration of food and formula

### **You Should Not See**

- Diapers changed infrequently or only on a strict schedule
- Babies left in cribs, playpens, swings, or infant seats for prolonged periods of time
- Frequent changes of caregivers throughout the day or frequent staff turnover
- Staff appearing cold or detached, as if caring for infants is a chore
- Infants left unattended