



Learning is your first step in finding

how to recognize child care **quality**

Quality Care Checklist

Your Child Comes First

Of course, as a parent, or guardian you're constantly putting your child first! When you're interviewing providers, consider your child's point of view. Think about what kinds of people and activities make *your child* comfortable and happy. Think of the questions your child might ask:

- Who's going to care for me?
- Are there plenty of toys I can reach and enjoy?
- Where will I keep my "stuff"?
- Is everyone having fun?
- What will I do all day?

Choosing the Right Caregiver

The right caregiver will develop a positive, loving relationship with your child. This is a key indicator of quality care. The right caregiver will also relate well to you and have values and attitudes that are similar to yours. Watch the caregiver interact with the children. Then ask these questions:

- Are the children happy and involved?
- Does the provider seem warm and friendly? Is she or he calm and patient with the children?
- Does the provider listen to the children?
- Does the provider talk to them and encourage them to express themselves?
- Does the caregiver have special training or credentials?

Caregivers and Your CCR&R

In Missouri, you'll find three categories of child care: **licensed**, **license-exempt**, and **unregulated**. **Licensed** providers have been inspected by the State Department of Health to ensure they meet all child care requirements. **License-exempt** providers have been inspected to ensure they meet basic health and safety standards. **Unregulated** providers are not inspected by any agency.

The staff of your local CCR&R can explain the differences in regulations for child care centers, family child care homes, part-day and full-day programs, and after-school programs. If you choose unregulated care, the CCR&R staff can put you in touch with the child abuse/neglect screening service available through the Family Care Safety Registry, www.dhss.mo.gov/FCSR/AboutRegistry.html.

Selecting the Right Program

The right program will show signs of quality care. Look for activities and experiences that are appropriate for your child's age and that will help him or her learn and grow. When you visit a center or home, ask these questions:

- Is there a choice of toys and materials for the age of my child?
- Do the activities allow children to think and play creatively?
- Can children play alone and in groups?
- Is a schedule posted? Does it include a mix of times for play, activities, stories, and rest?
- Can parents visit at any time of the day?
- What training has the provider received?

Recognizing the Right Place

The physical setting or environment is another important sign of quality child care. You want to make sure your child is healthy, safe, and comfortable while you're at work. To make sure the place is right for your child, consider these questions:

- If required, is a current license or certificate displayed?
- Are there enough caregivers for the number and ages of children?
- Are the exits unblocked and are there fire extinguishers and smoke detectors?
- Are the rooms clean, well-lit, and cheerful?
- Are there enough materials and equipment for play? Are they clean, in good repair, and appropriate?

CCR&R

- Provides **FREE** child care referrals
- Makes referrals, not recommendations
- Keeps your information confidential



The Provider

- Do the children appear to be happy and involved?
- Does the provider appear to be warm, friendly, calm, and patient?
- Does the provider listen to what the children have to say?
- Does the provider have experience, special training, and references?
- Does the provider have written policies, such as policies for payment, discipline, and attendance?
- Has the provider been screened for child abuse/neglect?

The Program

- Are a variety of materials available to help children learn and grow?
- Do activities encourage children to think creatively?
- Is there a time for children to work in small groups, plus time for them to play alone?
- Is there a schedule posted? Does it show a balance of play time, story time, activity time (indoors and outdoors), and nap time?
- Can parents visit at any time of the day?
- Does the provider have a back-up plan in case of an emergency?

The Place

- Is there an up-to-date license or certificate posted?
- Are there enough adults for the number of children and age of children in a group?
- Is the facility cheerful, clean, and well-lit?
- Are there enough equipment and materials for all ages of children?
- Is the equipment safe, clean, and in good repair?
- Are there working smoke detectors, fire extinguishers and a first aid kit?
- Is an emergency evacuation plan posted and practiced?
- Are there appropriate car seats or safety belts for each child if children are being transported?

Before You Call

Before You Call or Visit a Program Consider This:

- Your child's age
- Days and hours care is needed
- Program location
- Fees you can afford
- Personal preferences (i.e. are there any pets, is it a non-smoking environment, does the provider take the children on field trips)
- Your child's special medical or developmental needs

Make the Right Decision

Be sure to visit every program you are considering. Visit more than once, at different hours of the day. That's the best way to see how the program works. You'll also get a better "feel" for the caregiver's style and daily routines. Keep up the visits once you've enrolled your child, and keep the lines of communication open between you and the caregiver.

Remember, quality of care may vary from one program or provider to the next. For this reason, Missouri CCR&R agencies cannot *recommend* individual providers or programs. As a parent, you're the one who is truly qualified to judge which care is best for your child.

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MISSOURI
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RESOURCE
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(800) 200-9017
Visit our web site
at moccrrn.org

The Missouri Child Care Resource and Referral Network serves as a network of Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Agencies for all 115 counties of Missouri. We advocate for high-quality, affordable and accessible care for all Missouri families.

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Good Beginnings Last A Lifetime

Make a Smart Child Care Choice



Give your *child*
the **best start**
possible...



Choose **quality**
child care

Now that you're about to select a child care provider, you want to know how to make a wise choice. Quality care makes all the difference in the life of your child. That's why you'll want to find just the right caregiver. Someone who will love and care for your child like you do. Someone who sees eye to eye with you on what's best for your child. Someone who will provide the best possible environment for your child's growth and development.

Don't Worry... We'll Help You Get Started

When it comes to finding child care, you may feel a little overwhelmed at first. That's perfectly natural! Once you know *what* to look for, you'll want to know *where* you can go to find it. That's how your local child care resource and referral agency (CCR&R) can help you. The staff members there will do all they can to help you so that you can find the caregiver or program that best suits you and your child. And, they'll stay in touch with you until your search is complete.

Resource and Referral: How it Works

Throughout Missouri, there are local CCR&R agencies. The one nearest you will give you information about local child care providers that meet your basic requirements for your child's care and who may have openings. Once you have a list of these providers, you can start interviewing them. Search carefully and completely and remember to ask potential providers lots of questions. Soon you'll be on your way to finding quality care for your child. To find the local CCR&R that serves your area call 800-200-9017 or visit www.moccrrn.org.

