

Choosing child care checklist

What is important to you and your family when choosing child care: Cost? Hours? Quality of care? It may help you to take this checklist when you visit sites. Before you visit, pick the questions on the checklist that are most important to you, and ask about them during your visit.

What will my child do during the day?

- ◆ Are there planned activities that help my child learn (quiet and active, indoor and outdoor)?
- ◆ Will my child have time every day to run, catch, climb and throw?
- ◆ Do children have time to play on their own and can they get to toys and activities?
- ◆ Is TV and computer time limited?
- ◆ Is the space comfortable, organized, child-friendly and safe?
- ◆ Is rest time based on the needs of each child (infants sleep on their own schedule, quiet activities for children who don't nap)?
- ◆ Are there plenty of books for children?
- ◆ Are books available to children in their own languages and for different ages?
- ◆ Is there circle time, storytelling or reading?
- ◆ Are families' cultures respected in activities and celebrations?

How are parents included?

- ◆ Am I encouraged to spend time as a guest for lunch or as a volunteer?
- ◆ How will I hear about my child's day?
- ◆ Do I feel respected as my child's first and most important teacher?

Will my child be safe and healthy?

- ◆ Are there enough staff members to give attention to all the children?
- ◆ Are toys and equipment safe and age-appropriate?
- ◆ Are staff trained in CPR and first aid?
- ◆ Is the licensed space child-proofed (cleaning supplies up high, electrical outlets covered, medicines locked up)?
- ◆ Do children and staff wash hands often (before eating and after using the toilet, blowing noses, diaper changing, playing outside)?
- ◆ Are there regular fire drills?
- ◆ Does the outdoor play area seem safe?
- ◆ Are there locks on the door to keep strangers out and children in?
- ◆ If my child goes to school, is there a plan for getting him/her to and from school safely?
- ◆ Are there rules for when a child becomes ill?
- ◆ How often are diapers changed?
- ◆ Is there an emergency plan for contacting families?

What will my child eat, and when?

- ◆ What are the rules about food brought from home?
- ◆ Are children offered healthy meals and snacks?
- ◆ Are children's choices, appetites, allergies and religious or cultural restrictions respected?

Do I agree with the discipline policy?

- ◆ Do staff set limits that are reasonable, clear, consistent and age-appropriate?
- ◆ Do staff use calm voices and redirect children to other activities if there's a problem?
- ◆ What happens when children hit, bite or bully?

How are staff supported?

- ◆ Do staff get training and continuing education?
- ◆ Do staff have break times?
- ◆ Do staff get time to plan activities?

Will my child thrive here?

- ◆ Are different cultures, ethnicities and abilities valued?
- ◆ Do staff smile at, talk and play with, and listen to children?
- ◆ Do staff encourage creativity and age-appropriate independence?
- ◆ Do staff hold and cuddle with infants and toddlers often, including while feeding?
- ◆ Will the same people take care of my child regularly?
- ◆ Are children comforted when needed?
- ◆ Is this setting bright, pleasant and happy?
- ◆ Will my child have fun here?



Why should I choose licensed care for my child?

The Washington State Department of Early Learning (DEL) licenses more than 7,000 child care providers in Washington. There are three kinds of licensed child care: child care centers; family home child care providers (who offer care in their homes); and school-age programs.

Licensed child care facilities follow state licensing rules to make sure kids are in a safe and healthy environment.

Licensed providers:

- ◆ Get health and safety checks from DEL staff to ensure their facilities are safe for children.
- ◆ Have child development training.
- ◆ Have first aid and CPR training.
- ◆ Undergo criminal background checks for themselves, staff and household members of family home child care providers.
- ◆ Follow state rules about:
 - ◆ How they interact with children.
 - ◆ Staff-to-child ratios.
 - ◆ What children are taught.
 - ◆ How to handle and prepare food safely.
 - ◆ How to store medicine, cleaning supplies and other toxins safely.
 - ◆ Safe indoor and outdoor play areas.

What is Early Achievers?

Early Achievers, Washington's quality rating and improvement system, is a voluntary program for licensed child care providers to earn ratings based on the quality of care they offer to families.



Participating child care providers receive free coaching and training to improve the quality of their programs and have opportunities to earn scholarships that pay for college classes and related expenses.

There is no additional cost to families.

- ◆ Simply by participating in Early Achievers, child care providers demonstrate a commitment to improving quality of care to children.
- ◆ Providers and programs are rated on instruction, staff training, environment and family engagement to support children's success.



Learn more about choosing child care, how to find licensed child care and how to get help paying for it:
www.del.wa.gov/care

Learn more about Early Achievers:
www.del.wa.gov/care/gris

Contact Child Care Aware of Washington for referrals to licensed child care in your community:
1.800.446.1114 or
www.wa.childcareaware.org

Check the status of licensed providers through Child Care Check:
www.del.wa.gov/check



P.O. Box 40970
Olympia, WA 98504-0970
Toll-free: 1.866.482.4325

www.del.wa.gov

Kids' Potential, Our Purpose!

You Have a Choice!

A Guide to Finding Quality Child Care in Washington State

