



CHILD CARE GUIDE

Helping Parents Select Quality Child Care



helpline
center

connect • prevent • support

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Please keep in mind that the Helpline Center Child Care Guide provides helpful information in selecting child care, but cannot guarantee the selection of a quality child care provider. You, as parent or guardian, are responsible for determining and monitoring the quality of each child care facility. You must make the final decision about childcare arrangements.











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About the Child Care Helpline Guide



The Helpline Center has been connecting parents in the Sioux Empire with child care resources for over 25 years. We've provided this guide as a tool for parents to help them in selecting quality child care that will best meet their needs. 11 million children under the age of 5 spend 35 hours per week or more with a child care provider. Confidence that your child is safe and happy in a stimulating environment allows you to excel in your workplace. Research has shown that a child's healthy development is dependent on positive early experiences, and the child care provider you choose can have a major impact. Being able to depend on high quality, reliable daycare is essential for parents. Considering all of the aspects of child care may make this choice seem overwhelming. Using this guide can help you make the best decision for you and your family.

This guide can help you:

-  Understand what quality child care is and why it's important
-  Know what to look for in quality child care providers
-  Understand licensing requirements
-  Understand different types of care, and the advantages and disadvantages of each type
-  Choose child care that is right for your child's unique temperament
-  Understand and facilitate the interviewing process
-  Understand the resources available for Child Care Assistance, as well as budgeting for care
-  Maintain a great relationship with the provider you choose
-  Recognize when something is wrong
-  Prepare your child for daycare



STEP 1: Dial 2-1-1 to reach the Child Care Helpline for resources and referrals

Start looking for care as far in advance as possible. Finding quality child care of any type—whether it is a child care center, a family daycare, care for infants, toddlers, or school age—can take some time. Some providers may have waiting lists, so try to give yourself at least 2 months to make this decision. By calling 211, visiting the Helpline Center’s website www.helplinecenter.org or searching the Helpline Center Child Care database you can receive provider referrals that list child care options that are customized to meet your needs.



STEP 2: Visit and ask questions

When you visit child care providers, consider key indicators of quality. Use the checklist inside this guide to help determine if the provider meets your needs.



STEP 3: Make a choice

Use the Child Care Helpline Guide when selecting a provider for your family. Consider what you saw at each visit, and make the best choice for your child and family.



STEP 4: Stay involved

The work isn’t over once you have found quality care for your child. You and your child care provider are now partners, and positive communication is essential for this relationship.

DEFINING QUALITY CHILD CARE

The National Association for The Education of Young Children suggests that a quality child care provider is one that “provides a safe, nurturing environment that promotes the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of young children while responding to the needs of families.” Similarly, for parents, quality care is one where their child feels safe and secure, and receives individual attention. When a family receives quality child care, their quality of life at home is better. Their children will be more likely to have higher rates of physical, intellectual, and socio-emotional development.

To find out how South Dakota ranks in providing quality child care, visit www.childcareaware.org



Quality providers will demonstrate the following:

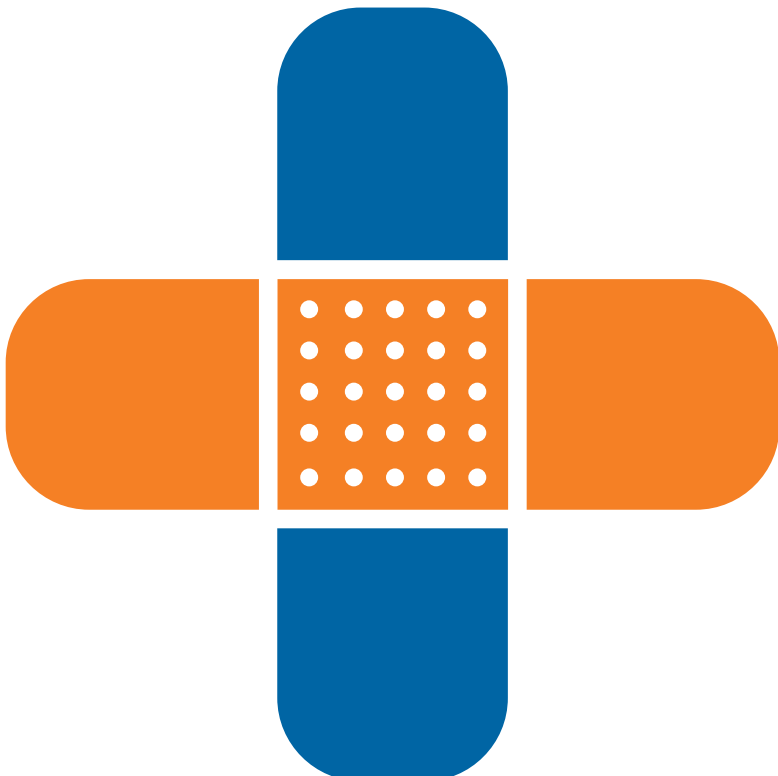
- Shows love and respect towards children
- Exhibits genuine enjoyment in interacting with young children
- Provides children with learning experiences that match their ages and interests
- Talks with and reads to children daily
- Positively acknowledges children’s accomplishments
- Positively encourages children
- Provides a safe environment in which children can freely explore

The most important elements to consider when making your choice for quality child care are the **Supervision & Learning Environment, Health & Safety, and Training & Qualifications**. The following sections will help you know what to look for when considering a provider.

Health & Safety

The health and safety of your child is of utmost importance. city health code enforcement certainly helps to reduce the spread of illness and also addresses building safety, but there are other areas parents should be aware of when it comes to the health and safety of their children with a provider. Parents should consider the provider’s experience and education, menu plans, hygiene, and appropriate emergency procedures. Quality providers will emphasize hand washing for staff and children. Floors, tables, and toys should be clean and in good repair, and there should be a separate area for diapering. The provider should have a procedure in place for handling soiled diapers.

To assure your child’s nutritional needs will be met, ask to see a sample menu. Ask the provider what guidelines they follow to promote healthy eating habits, as well providing variety in their menus. It is a requirement for all providers who are licensed and registered to have a written emergency plan. Additionally, they should have a well-stocked first aid kit and emergency supplies, as well as up to date contact information for the children. Providers should also have a plan in place to notify parents if a child is sick or hurt. Providers who are registered with the City and State are required to have a minimum of 6 hours of education, including CPR and First Aid.





Supervision & Learning Environment

In a quality daycare, a child is supervised at all times, yet has the opportunity for independent play. Your child should be able to explore and play, but also be closely monitored. The number of children compared to the number of adults is called the **child to staff ratio**. Research has shown that smaller group sizes work best. This is especially important for infants and younger children who need more individual attention. Quality providers will comply with mandated ratios.

A quality environment will be one in which the physical and emotional environment are supported and safe. Look for a physical environment that is well organized, warm, and inviting. There should be a variety of play materials and access to hands on activities. Outside, the children should have opportunities to safely run, jump, climb, and explore.

A provider that emphasizes play knows that it is the most important way for children to learn what they need to know. Look for daily activities in hands on play, and music that supports emotional development. Children should appear happy, comfortable and engaged.

A great provider praises and acknowledges good behavior in children, and uses consistent, positive discipline or redirection.

They will also have realistic expectations of behavior based on the child's stage of development. High quality providers do a good job of hiring and keeping staff. Quality providers will have low turnover rates.

Training & Qualifications

Research has shown that providers who have training and education in child development will be more likely to keep your child on track and help get them ready for school. They will also be more likely to organize activities and materials that allow children to grow and learn. Quality providers will have a combination of training, education, and experience that will allow them to have a positive relationship with both you and your child.

Licensed and registered providers are required to meet a minimum number of training hours every year. Training areas could include First Aid/CPR, child development, cultural diversity, food handling, etc. For more information regarding registration and licensing requirements, see the following section.

The relationship between parents and providers is also very important. Parents and providers should both feel free to express their views and feelings, and also be able to listen and support each other. A quality child care setting is one in which the parent should feel informed and welcome.

PROVIDER LICENSING REQUIREMENTS

Child care providers can be licensed or registered with the State of South Dakota and the City of Sioux Falls. There is a distinct difference between:

Licensing

and

Registration

>12

Any time a provider cares for more than 12 children, they are required by state law to be **licensed**.



Registered family day care is the care of 12 or fewer children. In the state of South Dakota, providers caring for 12 children or less are not required to be registered. These providers voluntarily agree to meet minimum regulations required by the state. These minimum regulations include requirements for health, safety, staff hiring, equipment, ratios, and more.

**SIoux
FALLS**

The City of Sioux Falls has a **registration** process that is mandatory for all child care providers who care for 12 or less children in their home, for any form of compensation. They are required to register with the Sioux Falls Health Department. State Registration is voluntary; the city of Sioux Falls registration is mandatory.

CHILD CARE CENTER



Child Care Center • State Licensed

There are two types of licensed child cares. Group Family Day Care Homes are licensed for 13-20 children. Child Care Centers are licensed for 21 or more children. South Dakota law defines licensed care as providing child care for a part of a 24-hour day to children from one or more unrelated families, including the provider's own children under the age of six years, regardless of the source of income.

- A licensed facility may be located in the provider's own home or in a separate facility.
- Licensed facilities are mandated by law to be licensed regardless of funding source.
- A licensed facility may be operated as a nonprofit organization or as an independent, proprietary facility.
- A licensed facility is required to obtain a license prior to operating.
- Licensed facilities are inspected once each year.

FAMILY CHILD CARE HOME



Family Child Care Home • State Registered

South Dakota law defines a Family Child Care Home as one in which care is given on a regular basis for any part of a 24 hour day to 12 or less children from more than one unrelated family. This includes any children under the age of six who are living in the home.

- Family child care is a service provided in the provider's home.
- Family child care providers are registered rather than licensed. Registration is a voluntary process where the applicants declare their intent to provide family child care and agree to comply with standards that have been established by the Department of Social Services. A registration certificate is in effect for two years. Registration is legally mandated when a provider receives compensation from public funds. Providers who are not receiving reimbursement from public funds and caring for 12 or fewer children are exempt from registration. A registered family child care provider must be at least 18 years old.
- Family Day care homes are inspected once every two years.



Before & After School Care Center • State Licensed

Before & After School Care Centers provide care and supervision before and after school hours for children who are five years of age or older and enrolled in school.

- Before & After School Care Center providers serve only school-age children and may be providing care for either part of a day or full-time during school breaks.
- Before & After School Care Centers are required to become licensed regardless of the funding source or location of the program. Centers are inspected each year.
- Before & After School programs are required to obtain a license prior to opening.
- The exemption to this requirement is if the after school program is providing educational or recreational activities.

Licensed and registered child care providers may be eligible to receive reimbursement through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP). This program is administered by the Child and Adult Nutrition Services Program in the SD Department of Education.

CITY OF SIOUX FALLS

Family Child Care Home • City of Sioux Falls Registered

Family Day Care Home means a dwelling, occupied as a residence by the care provider, in which family-like care is given to not more than 12 children including the provider's own children who are under the age of six years, for any part of the 24-hour day, for compensation, whether paid directly or indirectly.

Types of Day Care from the City of Sioux Falls Zoning Department and Definitions.....



Day Care: The providing of care and supervision of children/ adults as a supplement to regular parental/home care, without transfer of legal custody or placement for adoption, with or without compensation, on a regular basis for a part of a day.



Day Care, Home: Care is provided in a dwelling and the number of persons cared for is limited to a maximum of six adults or six children under the age of 14 years. Included in the number of children are the provider's own children six years and under. The dwelling shall be used as the principal use, and the day care use accessory.



Day Care, Family: Care is provided in a dwelling. The number of persons cared for is seven to 12 adults or children under the age of 14 years including the provider's own children six years and under. The dwelling shall be used as the principal use, and the day care use is accessory.



STATE & CITY REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

State Registration

Voluntary for providers caring for 12 or less children

A home inspection is provided initially and every 2 years

6 hours of training is required annually, including CPR and first aid

Provider has a physical exam

A central registry screen is done for anyone over the age of 10 in the household

Up to date shot records for the children in their care

Felony background check required for provider

Ratio: 4 children under the age of two years; of those 4 children, no more than 2 can be under the age of one year.

Meet minimal health and safety standards

Ability to accept Child Care Assistance

Qualify to receive assistance from a federal food program

City of Sioux Falls Registration

Mandatory for any Family Child Care provider living within the Sioux Falls city limits

Inspections are currently done on newly registered day cares and only at those in which the Health Department has received a complaint

6 hours of educational classes, including CPR and first aid

Central registry screen is done for anyone over the age of 15 in the household

Felony background check on the provider and anyone who frequents the home and report if anyone is required to be listed on the sex offender list

Ratio: 4 children under the age of two years; of those 4 children, no more than 2 can be under the age of one year.

Meet minimal health and safety standards

If you have additional questions about licensing or registration requirements, please call the Child Care Helpline by dialing 211.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT SETTING

Some parents have a preference for smaller, in-home daycares, while others prefer child care centers. In order to choose the setting that will be right for your family, it is helpful to examine the advantages and disadvantages of each type of care.

Type of Care • Day Care Center

Advantages

- ✔ Reliable (have staff available to fill in when someone is sick)
- ✔ Ample supervision
- ✔ Staff is trained in Early Childhood Education
- ✔ Licensed and regulated
- ✔ Some may offer preschool curriculum
- ✔ Structured activities
- ✔ May offer field trips, have a playground, or other activities
- ✔ May offer transportation

Disadvantages

- ✘ More expensive than home daycare
- ✘ Centers that care for infants may be difficult to find or may be full
- ✘ Kids may get sick more often in a daycare center due to exposure to more children
- ✘ Closed during holidays
- ✘ Rigid pick-up & drop-off times
- ✘ Higher turnover rate

Type of Care • In Home Daycare

- ✔ Nurturing, home like atmosphere
- ✔ Total number of children is smaller than at large daycare centers
- ✔ Kids may receive more individual attention
- ✔ Kids socialize with other kids of the same or different ages
- ✔ Usually more flexible with pick-up and drop-off times
- ✔ Some may offer preschool curriculum
- ✔ Low turnover rate

- ✘ Less regulation, may or may not be licensed/regulated
- ✘ May need to find backup care if provider is sick
- ✘ May not have formal training in child development
- ✘ Less stringent licensing requirements
- ✘ Closed for holidays & vacation

UNDERSTANDING YOUR CHILD'S NEEDS

Before you begin your search for child care, think about your child's stage of development and temperament. Knowing your child's strengths and needs will help you in choosing a child care program. First, consider their development stage:

Infants have unique and personal rhythms, strengths, styles and needs. Some infants are adaptable, while others are cautious or challenging. Some react to the world by not holding back, some are quiet watchers. Activity levels vary for babies from high to low, as does their tolerance for change. Some babies are social and interactive, while others need time to warm up. Infants are developing faster now than ever. Everything they do has an effect on their growing brain. Caregivers need to provide a stable, yet flexible schedule that meets the individual needs of your baby. Babies need to be cuddled, carried, spoken to, stimulated & loved.

First time parents may feel especially anxious about choosing child care for their newborn. New parents should take the time to thoroughly interview, visit, and check the references of potential providers. By using the Interview & Decision Process section of this guide, new parents can feel more confident when interviewing providers and checking references.

Toddlers are growing at a fantastic rate and have many important issues to learn about and resolve. Toddlers' worlds are expanding rapidly as they become mobile and verbal. They are discovering that words have power, that the ability to walk offers the possibility of walking into danger, and that adults have become interested in their learning about toileting. They are struggling every day with a drive toward independence; to grow, to be in charge, to do things for themselves. At the same time, they are still very dependent on adults. These issues of power and control contribute to what some call "the terrible twos," but a caregiver who understands and enjoys toddlers can make this stage the "terrific twos."

Preschoolers are enthusiastic, outgoing and eager to try new things. They are curious about the world around them, questioning how and why things work, experimenting with new words and forming new friendships. Through playing with materials and their friends, the preschooler learns new information and works out normal fears and fantasies. Routines are critical in their daily schedule in order for them to feel comfortable and safe in exploring and learning. Enough time to adjust to new situations is important for this bunch.

Young School Age children seem to have settled down to a steadier pace of growing and learning. They are interested in real-life tasks and activities. Doing things together with friends, teamwork and following rules becomes important.

Older School Aged have a deeper sense of self; social acceptance and achievement become priorities. They begin to see authority figures as imperfect human beings, and feel they do not need adult supervision. School and community influences become more important to them than home and family priorities.

The Child Care Helpline can also assist parents in finding before and after school care or programs for their older children.

THE INTERVIEWING AND DECISION PROCESS

Once you have received a list of referrals from the Child Care Helpline, call several that fit your needs. Start early, because finding good care can take some time. When you call, introduce yourself as a parent looking for child care, so they can inform you right away as to whether or not they have vacancies. If they do, schedule a time to go. When you visit, keep in mind three things: Look, Listen and Count. Be sure to prepare a checklist of questions, a notepad and paper to bring with you before you visit.

Look



- Cozy, home-like setting
- Clean and safe
- Comfortable and organized
- Dangerous items out of reach
- Plenty of activities, books, toys
- Outdoor space to run and play
- Equipment in good condition
- Emergency numbers should be visible and accessible

Listen



- Happy and engaged children and teachers
- If it's too quiet, there may not be enough activity
- If there's excessive noise, it might indicate lack of control

Count



- Count number of children in the group, count number of caregivers. The smaller the ratio, the more attention your child will receive.
- Does the provider follow state and city ratio requirements?

Take notes at each site you visit, what you liked/disliked. Use these notes for possible interview questions and discussions.

The Interview

Interviewing a potential provider can seem intimidating. The interview will likely tell you whether the provider will be a good match for your family, so it is very important. The Helpline Center has created an interview sheet with a list of specific questions that you can bring with you when you meet the provider. The interview sheet can be downloaded from the Helpline Center’s website www.helplinecenter.org.

Share with the provider that you will be asking them a series of questions to help make your decision. Make sure you are satisfied with their answers before you leave. You can find out if the provider has had complaints or citations filed against them by visiting these websites:

www.dss.sd.gov/childcare and www.siouxfalls.org/health.aspx and by calling the Dept. of Social Services (605) 773-4766 or by contacting the City of Sioux Falls Health Dept. (605) 367-8760.

Additional Considerations

Be sure to take a moment to ask yourself the following questions when you visit.

1. Do the children seem happy and engaged? Yes/No
2. Are crying children responded to immediately? Yes/No
3. Do caregivers cuddle babies? Talk directly to the children?
Is their tone friendly and caring? Yes/No
4. Is the place clean and pleasant? Yes/No
5. Is the bathroom a pleasant setting, encouraging children to use it? Yes/No
6. Are appropriate safety measures (fire extinguisher, first aid kit, safety gates, safety plugs for electrical outlets, etc.) in place? Yes/No
7. During the hours you and your child are apart, will you feel at ease knowing your child is in this setting? Yes/No

Checking Parent References

Calling references is an important way to get more information. You would be well advised to pass on any provider who cannot or will not give you names of other parents. Ask each daycare you’re considering for a list of past and present parent references—and call them. Ask specific questions: Instead of asking whether they like the daycare, ask what exactly they do and don’t like about it. If their child is no longer there, ask why.

Can you give me the names & numbers of some families I could call for references?









Name _____ Phone # _____


Name _____ Phone # _____

Introduce yourself

“My name is _____. I am considering using (provider’s name) as my child care provider. (Provider’s name) gave me your name as a reference. Would you be willing to take a few minutes to answer a few questions?”

Possible questions to ask


-  How long have you known the provider and in what capacity?
-  Tell me about the strengths and weaknesses of this provider/program.
-  Was there staff turnover and if so how was it handled?
-  Did you have any concerns about the provider?
If so, did the provider listen?
-  How was discipline handled?
-  Are you aware of any other parents having concerns about the care provided?
-  What are the reasons you stopped care?
-  Would you recommend this child care program?

 Listen to what is and isn’t said. Silence and hesitation can speak volumes. Find a non-threatening way to probe a little deeper if an answer puzzles or disturbs you. While programs are naturally going to give you names of “glowing” references, don’t assume that all you are going to hear is praise. Even people who love their child care provider may tell you something which will help you decide whether or not the program will work for your child.

BUDGETING FOR CHILD CARE

Child care is essential for the economy and for the family. It allows parents to concentrate on their jobs, and it helps children learn the social, emotional, and intellectual skills needed to succeed in school. Finding affordable, accessible, high quality child care can be challenging. Care during non-traditional hours, part time care, and temporary care can be more expensive as well. Child care is costly, but it is only a short term expense. It is very important to include child care into your monthly budgets. Single parents may be especially affected by the high cost of child care, especially when they have more than one child. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends that parents spend no more than 10 percent of their family income on child care.

The average costs for full time care in South Dakota, according to the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referrals (2011), are as follows:






	Infants	\$5,585
	Toddlers	\$5,371
	School Age	\$3,515

The chart below shows the average costs for full time care in the Sioux Falls area, based upon the 2012 Child Care Helpline database:

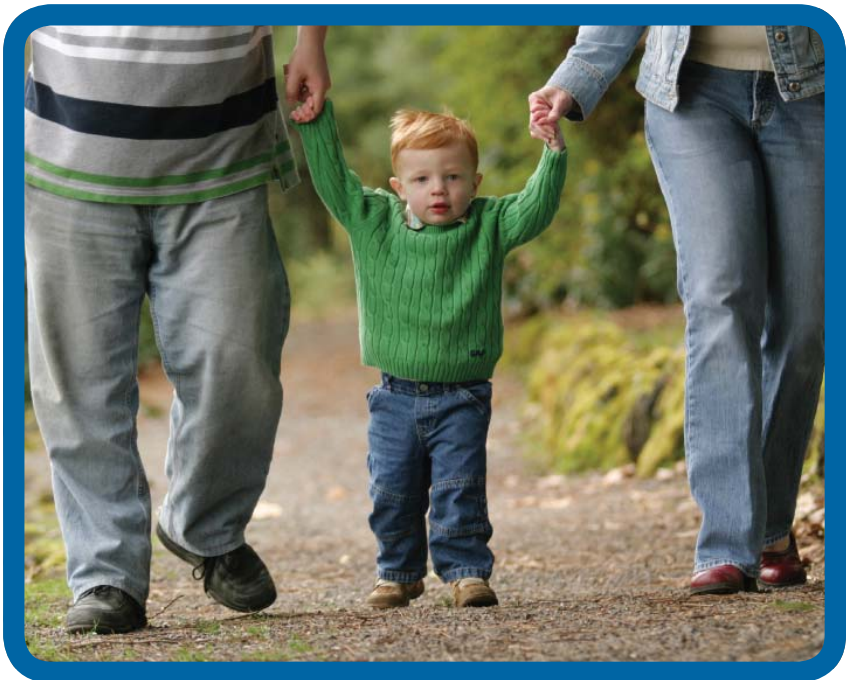
	Child Care Center	
	Infants	\$8,060
	Toddlers	\$6,968
	Family Child Care	
	Infants	\$5,980
	Toddlers	\$5,720

Many providers do offer multiple child discounts, or sliding fee scales. A budget sheet to assist in planning to cover the cost of daycare is available at the Helpline Center website, www.helplinecenter.org.

The state of South Dakota does provide Child Care Assistance for those who are eligible. You may be eligible if:










-  You are working at least 80 hours per month and within established income guidelines (175% of the Federal Poverty Level)
-  You receive TANF and are in an approved work activity
-  You are a college student who works or attends school a minimum of 80 hours per month
-  You are a high school or GED student
-  You are a licensed foster care family

For more information on South Dakota Child Care Assistance, or to apply, please call 1-800-227-3020, or visit South Dakota Department of Social Services website www.dss.sd.gov.



BUILDING A POSITIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH YOUR CHILD CARE PROVIDER

Trusting a person to take care of your children is a big decision. The work is not over once you have decided on a provider. You will need to work closely with them in order to assure that your child is receiving the best care possible. Remember, a provider also trusts you. There are several things you can do to establish and maintain a great relationship with your child care provider.

-  Honor the contract you agreed to follow
-  Pay your provider on time
-  Provide requested items
-  Hand in paperwork on time
-  Speak to your provider for a few minutes every day
-  Set monthly or quarterly meetings to discuss your child
-  Let the provider know if there are any family or life changes or events that could affect your child
-  Let the provider know of any changes in routine, or if someone else will be picking up your child
-  Get involved! Ask your provider how you can get involved with the program

Your provider will appreciate your involvement and interest in the program, as well as being kept informed. Also, let your caregiver know that you appreciate what they are doing! Thank them and let them know when you are pleased with something they have done. Nominating your provider for the Child Care Helpline's Provider of the Month award is a great way to recognize them. You can do this by dialing 211 for more information.

Most importantly, communicate openly and honestly. If there is a problem, address it promptly, but never in front of your children. When you address your issues, listen to your provider's response, and be willing to make compromises.

If you have an open, comfortable and trusting relationship with your provider, it is likely that most issues can be easily resolved. If your provider is unresponsive to your concerns or questions, you may need to consider finding new child care.

PREPARING YOUR CHILD FOR CHILD CARE

A new child care experience, whether it is the first one or a different one, is an important transition for children. Below are some ways that you can make this change easier for your children and yourself.

Talk with your child about what is happening. New experiences can be scary. If your child is able to understand, you can ease a lot of fears by talking to them about going to child care. Let them know what is different about the new situation, as well as what is the same. Children need to know that they will come home at the end of the day to a family where they are loved. A good book to read to your child as you prepare them for child care is *Going to Daycare* by Fred Rogers. You can also visit the www.helplinecenter.org for additional resources on introducing your child to daycare.

Share your positive attitude about child care with your child.

Your child will feel good about going to child care if you feel good about your decision. Talk with your child about the toys, people, and activities they will experience. Let your child know that going to child care can be fun.

Begin new child care situations gradually. It's frightening to be put into a new situation. You can help ease the transition by visiting the child care program together a few times before your child starts. You may find it helpful to spend time at the child care site yourself. Your presence will be comforting. Work together with the provider in creating a smooth transition to the child care routine. The provider can also help your child adjust to the new situation.









Establish good communication with your provider. Leaving a child in child care can be hard for parents. Let your provider know as much as possible about your child. A quality provider will take your child's unique characteristics into consideration as they care for them.

Help your child with transitions. Transition time is when parents and children separate in the morning and return together in the evening. When child care is new, transition time can be very difficult not only for parents and children, but also for the providers. Children need to learn to trust the new situation and to understand that their parents are not abandoning them. Children need to know that you will return.

Expect a reasonable amount of adjustment time. Every child is different. Some children will adjust almost immediately and others may take several months. Check in with your provider to see how things are going with your child.

KNOWING WHEN SOMETHING IS WRONG

As a parent, one of the biggest fears you may have is that someone you trust may mistreat or neglect your child. This is a rare occurrence, but unfortunately it does happen. In addition to your natural instinct as a parent, there are many signs that can indicate something may not be going well between your child and the provider.

-  Does your child act distraught when it's time to be left with his caregiver?
-  Does your child become moody or withdrawn, or have problems eating or sleeping?
-  Have you noticed that your caregiver doesn't respond appropriately to your child?
-  Does your caregiver refuse to answer questions about the day's activities, or engage in a discussion regarding your concerns?
-  Has your provider lied, stolen or otherwise betrayed your trust?
-  Have you dropped in unannounced and found your child inadequately supervised or cared for?
-  Has anyone, a friend, neighbor, or other parent, reported that your provider has not been treating your child well?
-  Do you simply have a bad feeling?

Talk to your caregiver, or ask other parents or neighbors to let you know what they see. However, if you have doubts that your child is being mistreated in any way, it is best to let the caregiver go and find new arrangements.

The Helpline Center is available to help answer any questions or concerns from parents as they search for quality child care. Please dial 211 to talk with our Child Care Coordinator.





Dial 2-1-1

helplinecenter.org

