

Choosing Child Care

Choosing child care is important to both you and your child. But finding the most appropriate setting can be stressful. It's important to remember that with child care, one size does *not* fit all. You should match your child care choice to your individual child's age, needs and personality. Here are some typical child care options and what they offer:

- **In-Home Care.** This means someone cares for your child in your own home. Although usually expensive, in-home care can be convenient and gives your child individual attention right at home. In-home caregivers often are unlicensed.
- **Family Day Care.** With family day care, a caregiver takes several children into his or her home. This setting offers children a chance to play with others their own age. Depending on local laws, home caregivers aren't always required to be licensed.
- **Child Care Centers.** In child care centers, larger groups of children are supervised by a group of teachers. Child care centers offer structured activities. When choosing a center, ask for proof of current licensure.
- **After-School Programs.** After-school programs offer a wide variety of activities that may be provided by your school, community center or church. They may include sports or art classes. Some schools also have before-school programs for parents who go to work early.

You won't know what a child care setting is really like until you visit it yourself. Ask the child care provider you're considering if you can drop in. Most reputable centers welcome drop-in visits. Visit during a busy time to see how the teachers work with the children and deal with different situations. Notice how clean the center is, how much space there is to run and explore, how emergency situations are handled and how smoothly activities run. Be sure to visit more than one center to compare.

Ask lots of questions, such as:

- **How large is the staff?** Having more adults around means that children are safer and get more personal attention.
- **What training and experience do the teachers have?** Choose a setting with teachers who have CPR and first-aid training. The head teacher should have some childhood education training.
- **Is the facility licensed or accredited?** Being licensed or accredited means that someone has already done some homework for you. However, not all licensing requirements are strict. So keep your own standards in mind, too.
- **How long have the teachers been there?** Lots of changes can leave children feeling insecure. If the staff has been there for a while, they probably are happy—and the children are happier, too.

**Give Care24 a call whenever you have questions about your child's health or well-being—
we're available 24 hours every day.**