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JFS 01264 (Rev. 11/2002)

Columbus, Ohio 43215-5222

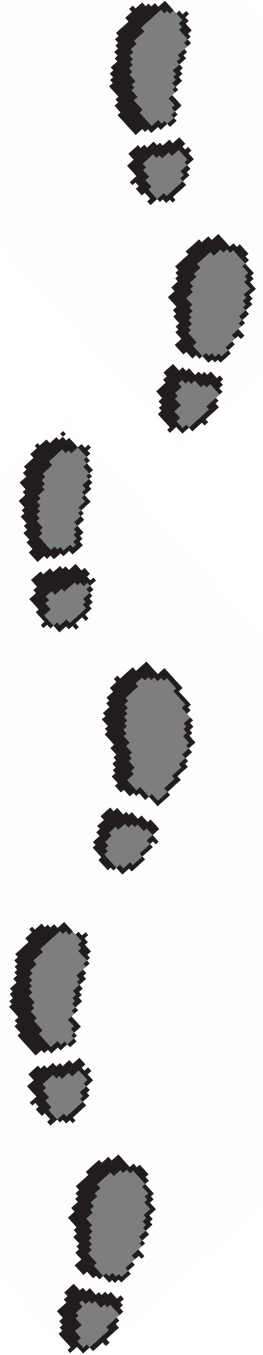
Ohio Department of Job & Family Services
Bureau of Child Care
255 E. Main St., 1st Fl.

Tom Hayes, Director
Ohio Department of
Job & Family Services

Bob Taft, Governor
State of Ohio

CHOOSING CHILD CARE

A TEN STEP GUIDE...



THE CHILD CARE CHALLENGE

Checklist for Choosing Appropriate Child Care

You're in the process of making one of the toughest decisions you'll ever make: Who will take care of your child while you're at work? The decision is made tougher by a number of choices. Many child care providers are qualified. The challenge is to decide the best fit for you and your child.

You must decide which type of child care best meets your family's needs ---- either a center, a family child care home, care in your home, or a combination. Visit several child care settings and meet with several providers before you decide.

This booklet is designed to help you determine the best fit for your specific needs in an easy, checklist format. Even if you're a great planner and you have your questions lined up and figured out, review the 10 Step Checklist as a reminder. you may not find every answer, but the basics are covered.



In addition, while this booklet is intended to be a helpful guide, most parents seem to agree: follow your intuition. You'll know when the situation *feels* right, but it is important to base those feelings on some sound guidelines.

There are two really positive results of choosing the best child care: happy, well-adjusted children, and peace of mind from making the right choice. As one mother put it, "The secret to being happy and productive at work is knowing that your kids are well-cared for."

If you have questions about home child care, please contact your county department of job and family services. If you have any questions about other child care in Ohio, want a copy of the child care licensing law, a copy of a facility's licensing record, or wish to file a complaint on a provider, write to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Bureau of Child Care, 65 E. State St., 5th Floor Columbus, OH 43266-0423.

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Step One: COVER THE BASICS

"Convenience wasn't as important as comfort... I had to feel comfortable with my choice."

- Where required, ask to see posted licence/certification/ registration
- Make sure facility meets health and safety standards
- Hours are convenient and flexible
- Cost is within budget; ask about hidden costs
- Location is near home or work, and transportation is provided, if needed
- Ask about holiday schedules and weather policy
- Ask for copy of rules, policies and procedures
- Accommodates your child's special needs, if necessary

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Step Two:

CHECK OUT STAFF & CAREGIVERS

"I like how involved the staff is and I especially like the person who runs the program."

- Staff works well with each other
- Director is accessible and responsive
- Caregiver is warm, friendly and affectionate with children
- Staff are aware of children's individual needs
- Caregiver actively listens and talks to children; promotes self-esteem
- Caregiver participates in activities with children
- Children act relaxed and secure
- Limits are set consistently and gently
- Babies are held and cuddled
- Child/staff ratio meets state standards
- Caregivers participate in training

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Step Three:

STUDY THE ENVIRONMENT

"Upon my visit, the first thing I noticed was how bright and happy the interior was."

- Setting is bright and cheery
- Building looks safe and well-maintained
- Facility is well-ventilated and warm during cold weather
- There are active and quiet play areas
- Indoor and outdoor facilities are furnished

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Step Four: KNOW IT'S SAFE

“My friend noticed some things I missed and had a different perspective.”

- ___ Hazardous supplies are well out of reach
- ___ Fire alarms and smoke detectors are installed
- ___ Look for window guards, gates on stairs, covers on radiators, caps on electrical outlets
- ___ Written names are on file of people to whom staff is authorized to release the children
- ___ Facility requires written permission for field trips
- ___ Emergency phone numbers are posted by phone
- ___ Children are never left alone or unsupervised
- ___ Outside play area is protected from hazards and traffic
- ___ Indoor toys are safe, age appropriate and in good condition
- ___ Areas are open to assure safe monitoring of children
- ___ Plans for fire and other emergencies are posted

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Step Five: MAKE SURE IT'S CLEAN & NUTRITIONAL REQUIREMENTS ARE MET

“Cleanliness played a big part in my decision. The provider I selected was organized and everything was clean.”

- ___ Kitchens and bathrooms are clean
- ___ Caregivers and children wash hands frequently
- ___ Each child has separate sleeping/napping area
- ___ Cots and blankets are cleaned regularly
- ___ There is a clean, separate area for diapering
- ___ Well-balanced, nutritious meals and snacks are served
- ___ Menus are posted and appropriate

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Step Six:

BE SURE THERE'S PROPER MEDICAL ATTENTION

"I pay a little more, but health is a priority. That helps a lot when the kids get sick."

- ___ Medical and immunization records are required for each child before admission
- ___ Caregiver knows how to recognize signs of illness
- ___ Caregiver has clear policies for children who become ill
- ___ All parents are notified if children are exposed to a communicable disease
- ___ Smoking is prohibited in the child care setting
- ___ Parents provide detailed instructions for caregiver to administer medication
- ___ Be sure caregiver is trained in first aid techniques and CPR

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Step Seven:

FAMILIARIZE YOURSELF WITH ACTIVITIES/ PROGRAM

"I found a program where I could see substantial developmental growth and progress in my children."

- ___ Schedule is balanced with time for playing, learning, growing
- ___ Separate infant play area is provided
- ___ Group and individual developmentally - appropriate activities are provided; children have choices
- ___ Routine times for eating, napping, toileting are scheduled
- ___ Upon visit, children are playing and involved in activities
- ___ Television viewing is limited, including use of movies
- ___ Activity schedule is posted.

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Step Eight:

TAKE NOTICE OF TOYS & EQUIPMENT

“I could see the toys were clean and there was plenty of space in which my child could move.”

- ___ Toys and activities are suitable for the age and abilities of your child
- ___ Toys are chosen to help children grow physically, mentally, and socially
- ___ Appropriate materials are easily accessible and in good condition
- ___ Materials include art supplies, blocks, toys, books, sand/water/clay, music
- ___ Child-sized tables and chairs are available
- ___ Materials for infants include: soft toys, rattles, mobiles, squeeze toys



Step Nine:

ASK ABOUT DISCIPLINE

“My child care center provides a parent handbook with all of its policies and program information. I found it really helpful.”

- ___ Ask for a written philosophy of discipline and methods used
- ___ Be sure methods of discipline are consistent and evenly applied
- ___ Ask how toileting accidents are handled
- ___ Rules are communicated simply so children know what is expected



Step Ten:

BE ASSURED PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

“They have an open door policy. I can come in any time, talk to the caregiver any time, and I feel completely welcome .”

- ___ Parents are welcome — announced or unannounced — anytime
- ___ Regular parent meetings are held
- ___ Parent-provider conferences are scheduled
- ___ See if you feel relaxed talking with the provider/ teacher/ director
- ___ Parents are welcome to participate in activities
- ___ References are available

NOTES