

Fact Sheets for Families

Choosing Quality Child Care Matters

Increasing numbers of families rely on non-parental care for their infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Since these young children spend so much of their time in the care of people other than their parents, attention to the “quality” of available care is important. Research shows that the “quality” of the programs selected by parents can have a significant impact on the daily lives and future achievements of their children.

Why is quality important?

Quality programs support the family in its child-rearing role and provide a safe, nurturing and healthy learning environment that promotes the emotional, social, physical, intellectual and creative development of all children.

What is quality child care?

A quality child care is a safe, loving and stimulating environment that challenges children to learn, reach their potential and ultimately prepares them for school. Research has recognized several indicators of quality Early Care and Education (ECE) programs that predict developmental and health outcomes. The following are the most important indicators:

- *A healthy and safe environment.* Ensuring that children are protected as much as possible from physical harm and illnesses.
- *Opportunities for stimulation and learning.* Providing a positive, happy and safe environment for exploration and learning.
- *Developmentally appropriate practice.* Offering activities that match each child’s age, interests, abilities and family background.
- *Quality relationship.* Forming a positive relationship between the provider and the child, and

provider and the parent where parent is treated as a partner.

- *Providers’ qualifications.* Providing care by qualified and trained ECE providers.
- *Predictable routines.* Establishing appropriate, familiar routines for feeding, napping, toileting, etc.
- *Adult to child ratio and group size.* Having the right number of children for each provider and a small group size.

What is good for you and your child?

Your decision to choose in-home care, a family child care home, a child care center, drop-in care, a Head Start program or preschool may depend on various factors such as availability, cost, hours and location. However, the type of program that you select should be the one that fits your and your child’s individual needs. As a parent, it is your responsibility to ensure that your child is safe and happy in a child care environment that is nurturing, fun and educational. Following are a few points to consider:

- In-home care by relatives and friends may be easier for you but is often of lower quality and may be harmful to a child’s development.
- A licensed program is better because it is required to meet state standards for good care.
- Small group size is the best.
- People who have received training in child care do a much better job.

Resources

Child Care Aware at www.childcareaware.org

American Academy of Pediatrics at www.aap.org

Zero to Three at www.zerotothree.org



California Childcare Health Program
UCSF School of Nursing
cchp.ucsf.edu
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