Child Care Checklist

**Five Steps to Finding the Right Program for Your Child**

1. **Explore — Know the options available to you.** Two basic types of early care and education programs are available:
   - Family Child Care - offers a small group setting within the provider’s home.
   - Child Care Center - offers group care in a large or small group setting.

Either use our online child care finder (http://www.childcaresource.org/) or call our Early Education Specialists at 913-573-2273 to receive child care referrals.

2. **Evaluate — Consider your preferences.** For example, think about the individual learning style of your child (does he prefer small groups or large groups), your family needs, the location and the hours of care.

3. **Observe — Visit at least three early care and education programs before making your final decision.** Interview prospective providers, and talk to everyone who will be involved in your child’s care. Plan to spend at least 30 to 60 minutes at each interview. Ask about the program specifics such as lesson plans, fee schedules, discipline, meal service and contracts, as well as references of other families whose children have attended the program. You may want to take your child with you to see if the program is a good fit for him or her. Pay attention to any uneasy feelings you may have. To help guide you through the interview process, a checklist of questions to ask child care providers is on page 3.

4. **Decide — Refer to your quality checklist and notes to make your decision, but, most of all, trust your instincts.** Keep in mind that the highest cost does not always guarantee the best program for your child and the least expensive rate does not necessarily mean a poor program. You also have the right and responsibility to ask for licensing information about a program (to view phone numbers for licensing information in each county, view the Licensing Regulations: Kansas and Missouri PDFs). If you have questions about child care business practices, call us at 913-573-2273 and a Child Care Source Referral Specialist will assist you.

5. **Follow Up — You have the right to visit your child’s early care and education program at any time your child is there.** Making such visits is one way to monitor the quality of care your child is receiving. If you have serious concerns about the health and safety of the program, contact the local child care licensing department immediately. Remember, you have the final responsibility for your child’s care and have the right to change providers whenever you are concerned about your child’s well-being or happiness.

continued
Quality Indicators: What to Look For

Health and Safety: Licensed programs (both centers and homes) meet the state’s health and safety standards. For a Provider Compliance History Check use the address below. This process can verify substantial complaints or current non-compliance issues. Families need to allow at least 30 days for a response. There is a nominal administrative cost for this service.

Kansas Department of Health and Environment
Child Care Licensing and Registration
1000 SW Jackson, Suite 200
Topeka, KS 66612-1274
Phone: (785) 296-1270
Fax: (785) 296-0803
email: Child Care Facilities Inspections and Licensing Section

Section for Child Care Regulation Division of Regulation and Licensure
Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services
PO Box 570
Jefferson City, MO 65102-0570
Phone: (573) 751-2450
Fax: (573) 526-5345
email: Child Care Regulation Division of Regulation and Licensure

Group Sizes: Some children thrive in a large group setting, while others need the quiet and comfort of a smaller group. You should look for an environment that most closely matches your child’s personality and needs.

Ratios: The younger the child, the more one-on-one care he/she may need. Find out what the child/adult ratio is in each child care facility you visit.

Caregiver Education and Turnover: An important indicator of quality is the level of education and continuing professional development that the child care provider has. In addition, low staff turnover provides consistency of care for children.

Accreditation: Accreditation is a stamp of quality that means a program meets nationally recognized guidelines for high quality early care and education. Child care centers may be accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Family child care providers may be accredited through the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC). School-age programs may be accredited through the National School Age Care Alliance (NSACA). In Missouri, the Missouri Center for Accreditation (MOA) accredits infant, preschool and school age programs.

Family Involvement: Look for a child care program that will offer opportunities for parent engagement and involvement that will benefit the growth and development of your child.
Checklist of Questions to Ask Child Care Providers

Health and Safety
- Are the proper adult/child ratios maintained?
- Is the program legally operating according to Kansas or Missouri law?
- Are children supervised by an adult at all times?
- Is the setting bright and attractive with adequate space for quiet and active play both indoors/outdoors?
- Are there safe areas for napping?
- Is the program clean overall (bathrooms and diapering areas, kitchen, play areas) and is hand-washing practiced regularly?
- Are all areas that are used for child care childproofed and free of hazards and is all equipment safe and in good repair?
- Are there working smoke detectors, fire extinguishers and a first aid kit?
- Is an emergency evacuation plan posted and practiced?
- Are there emergency contact names and numbers for each child?
- Is there a written policy for handling accidents or injuries?
- Does the provider have liability insurance or a waiver of liability?
- Does the provider or center staff have up-to-date training in pediatric first aid and CPR?
- Does the provider or center use appropriate car seats or safety belts for each child if children are being transported?
- If food is furnished at the facility, is it nutritionally balanced and prepared and stored in a safe manner?
- Does the provider have a back-up plan in case of a medical emergency?

Provider’s Personal Style
- Is the provider someone who is warm, sensitive to children’s needs, and responds lovingly and respectfully to children?
- Does the provider give each child individual attention?
- Are the children encouraged to use their imagination and creativity in ways that build self-esteem? For example, does the provider interact respectfully with children, using a positive tone of voice?
- Does the provider have a firm but loving approach to discipline? (Note: spanking, humiliating, neglect or abuse, withholding food or drink and restricting sleep or toileting are strictly prohibited in licensed facilities.)
- Is the provider willing to discuss your child with you, and are parents welcome to make unannounced visits at any time?
- Does the provider tell parents about their child’s achievements as well as concerns?
- Is the provider accepting of your cultural and family values?
- Does the provider encourage learning through play?

Provider’s Professionalism
- Is the provider knowledgeable about child development?
- Does the provider continue to keep up-to-date by attending trainings and seminars?
- How much experience caring for children does the provider have?
- Does the provider give parents a daily report (written or oral) of their child’s activities?
- Is there a written policy for handling complaints/concerns from parents?
- Are the child abuse reporting procedures provided to parents?
- Does the provider use written agreements (e.g., fee payment, discipline policy, attendance policy) and clearly communicate the expectations and policies of the program?
- Does the provider have a reference list of current and past clients available?