

Important things to consider and questions to ask when evaluating daycare facilities:

- Is the facility licensed and/or accredited?
- Distance from home/work?
- What are the hours of operation?
- What is the drop off/pick up procedure?
- What type of security measures are in place?
- Registration fee?
- Monthly fee?
- What does that fee cover?
- What other additional fees might there be (such as activity fees or enrichment opportunities)?
- Is there a fee reduction if a child is sick or takes vacation?
- Is there a waiting list?
- Can you visit while “class is in session” to get a better feel for the school?
- What is the Student/Teacher ratio in each classroom?
- What is the hiring procedure?
- What is the teacher(s) level of experience and education?
- Are the caregivers trained in child development?
- How long has each caregiver been with that daycare? Or what is the average tenure of each care giver?
- May I contact staff references?
- What is the curriculum for age group?
- What types of activities are done?
- Are there hands-on activities regularly?
- Do they go outside everyday (weather permitting)?
- Are there field trips?
- How many classes/age ranges are on playground at the same time?
- Do they have a large indoor play area for bad weather days?
- Do they have special instructor(s) for music or art? How often?
- Do they use computers? How often? How many children per computer?
- Do they have rest/nap time?
- What do they do for snack time and lunch each day?
- What is the level of parent participation? Can parents participate in program planning?
- Can parents take part in special events and trips?
- What is the illness policy?
- How do they handle discipline issues?
- How do they handle first aid situations? Does the staff have up-to-date first aid certificates?
- What is the fire/emergency plan?

Common Pitfalls when Choosing Daycare:

- Failing to do your research.
- Forgetting to gather the basic info for each age level before deciding on a particular daycare. What babies, 1's, 2's, 3's and 4's do each day can vary greatly.
- Becoming too focused on location, make sure the facility meets your overall needs.
- Selecting a daycare based on perceived “prestige”.
- Selecting a daycare because it's a bargain.
- Picking a particular facility because of a specific teacher.
- While word of mouth is a good place to start your search for a daycare facility, do not base your decision solely on it.
- Sticking with a daycare. If you aren't happy, start the process again.