



## ASSESSING QUALITY CHILD CARE SERVICE

Before choosing a childcare Centre, we recommend that you visit several childcare centers. Call and schedule an appointment with the centers you'd like to visit (give yourself about 20 to 30 minutes for each visit). When you call, tell the director how old your children are and that you'd like to learn more about the program. If you can, take your child with you when visit the centre and see how they get along with the adults who work there and how much they like the centre.

This checklist in the following pages is aimed at helping you to assess the quality of childcare services provided by DEL-Care. You may use the same checklist to make comparisons between centres.

We will like to have your feedback so if you like to share them with us, please submit the checklist to us, regardless of your final choice of Childcare Centre.

### TO FIND OUT BEFORE YOU VISIT

1. Name/and address/phone number of centre  
Ask yourself if you can easily get to the centre before and after work.
2. Hours centre is open.  
Some centers will provide care for longer hours if you pay an additional fee.  
Ask about this.
3. How much it costs per child, per week, or month.  
Make sure you ask about special fees for registration, field trips, late pick-ups, and so forth.
4. What age of children the centre cares for?  
Some centers don't take babies; some take only school-age children, and so forth.
5. Will they take your children when they're sick? Most centers won't take sick kids. It's better to keep your children at home when they're sick anyway. This way they won't get the other kids at the centre sick.
6. Don't be shy about checking references. Ask for at least two parent references and their phone numbers. Most parents are happy to share information with other parents and can be a wonderful resource.

# CHECKLIST

*Reprinted with permission from the National Network for Child Care - NNCC. Kees-Martin, S. (1981). Checklist for child care centers (HE-4-81). Reno, NV: University of Nevada Reno, Cooperative Extension.*

For the following items use a rating of:

0 Can't tell

1 No, not in centre

2 Somewhat

3 Yes, centre has

## WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE

- The centre is clean.
- Adults don't smoke around the children.
- No children seem to be wearing dirty diapers or training pants.
- Detergents, cleansers, and medicines are out of reach or locked up.
- Electrical outlets are covered with safety caps.
- Toys and equipment are in good repair, with no sharp edges, splinters, or loose parts.
- At least one adult in the centre has first-aid training, and first-aid supplies are available.
- Each child has their own space to store their belongings e.g. a cubby or drawer
- A space can be made dark and quiet for naptime, and a clean cot/mattress is set up in this space for each napping child.
- The toilet is easy for the children to get to.
- Floors are carpeted or have non-skid covering.
- Outdoor play area has both a bare surface for riding toys and a soft surface, like sand or grass, for playing
- The centre is warm, cheerful, and inviting.

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## HOW GOOD ARE THE CAREGIVERS

- Enough caregivers are with the children so that individual attention can be given if needed. For example, an upset child can be held, talked to, etc.
- Children are in small enough groups within the centre so that the children appear to be secure and "at home" rather than lost in a crowd.
- You can see caregivers communicating effectively with children - explaining in clear steps what they want the children to do, answering children's questions patiently, kneeling down to the child's eye level when talking.
- Children appear happy, comfortable, and relaxed - laughing, smiling, involved in play.
- Children enjoy one another - smile at each other, hold hands, hug, and help each other more than they fight or argue.
- Caregivers seem warm and affectionate with the children, smiling, cuddling, speaking nicely.
- Caregivers use children's first names or nicknames when talking to or about them.
- Caregivers do not refer to children by unpleasant names, such as "smarty," "brat," etc.
- Caregivers work and play with the children more than they stand back and tell them what to do
- At least one caregiver knows where all the children are. For example, if a parent comes to pick up a child, a caregiver knows who and where the child is.
- Caregivers encourage children to do some things for themselves, patiently giving time and help and praise so that the child can learn to master the skill, such as getting a drink alone, washing hands, putting away a coat or toy.
- Caregivers encourage listening and talking through planned activities like storytelling, word games, puppetry, doll play, and show and tell.
- The caregivers are people you would like your child to copy or imitate. In other words, children are apt to "do as caregivers do, more than as they say."

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- Caregivers encourage both boys and girls to play with all the materials - such as climbing and riding toys, dress-up clothes, tools, dolls, cars, and trucks.
- Caregivers encourage equal opportunities for boys & girls to participate in all activities.
- Children don't watch a lot of TV (if any at all) and what they watch is acceptable for the age group.

### SUPPLIES

- They have good story and picture books for the children.
- The centre has materials for quiet play, such as puzzles, and active play, such as riding toys.
- There are enough toys and materials so that each child can participate without having to wait more than a few minutes.
- For at least part of the day, children can choose what they want to do, either individually or in small groups.
- Children have the opportunity to use creative materials, such as paint, crayons, big blank pieces of paper rather than colouring books, paste, clay or play-dough, scissors, and pencils.
- The children's artwork is displayed in the centre and is also sent home for parents.
- Three or more of the following are available for the children to use: large and small riding toys, pull toys, pounding toys, beads for stringing, puzzles, small and large blocks, nested toys, small building toys like Tinkertoys, dress-up clothes, dolls.
- The outdoor play area has three or more of the following: cartons or boards for building, sandbox with sand toys, low slide, riding toys, balance beam, tires, seesaw.
- Meal and snack menus are posted so that parents know what the children are eating at the centre.

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## KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH THE PARENTS

- The menus are nutritious and contain foods your child likes. If possible, ask what the caregivers do if a child doesn't want to eat a food that's being served, and see if you agree with them.
- The caregivers' discipline the children in the same way that you do are consistent and fair with the children.
- The centre has a bulletin board for parents and posts the program schedule and other messages.

## **TOTAL SCORE**

### **HOW YOU FELT ABOUT THE CENTER WHEN YOU VISITED**

Overall, how do you feel about this centre?

Overall, how would your child feel about this place?

### WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR SCORE

The total score reflects both how good and how poor the centre is and how much you were able to observe. Review the information you have gathered and call back if you have questions that were not answered.

DEL-Care welcomes your submission of your findings as this will enable us to improve our services to meet the expectation of our potential clients.

In general, go by the following:

- 100-123 points -EXCELLENT CENTER  
worth getting on a waiting list to enroll your child.
- 80-100 points - GOOD CENTER  
worth keeping on your list of possible centres.
- 60-80 points - POSSIBLY OK  
think this over carefully though.
- 40-60 points - LOOK ELSEWHERE.
- 0-40 points - DO NOT SEND YOUR CHILD HERE  
probably not even following licensing rules

If you have a lot of items on the checklist with 0 points because you were not able to tell, then this will make the total score pretty low. If this happens, look at how you scored the rest of the items. If most of your other scores are "3's", then this could be a very good centre even though the total score is lower than it should be.

**Above all, trust your  
own judgment and feeling  
about a centre.**

**You know your child best  
and can tell which centre  
will be right for your family.**