

Thoughts for Tots "M"

Parent Education Network, Wyoming State PIRC,
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Choosing Child Care

Most moms and dads would choose to take care of their children in their own home. However, that is not always possible if both parents need to work to support the family. In such cases, then, it is necessary to find an excellent child caregiver who can provide for the needs of the child (or children). Finding the right child caregiver is important for the comfort of both children and parents. When parents are comfortable and happy with the caregiver, it is easier for the children to be comfortable and happy with the caregiver, too.

What Kinds of Care Providers Are Available?

- In-home Care: A friend, relative, babysitter, or nanny cares for your child in *your* home, full or part-time. No license from the state is required for this kind of care.
- Exempt Home Care: Home care providers may care for two children besides their own. Children go to the *provider's home*. No license from the state is required for this kind of care.
- Family Child Care Homes/Centers: Care is given *in the home of the provider*. The number and ages of children this provider can care for at one time depends on whether or not there is an assistant caregiver or second provider. The state licenses this kind of childcare provider.


- Child Care Centers: Care is given in a facility that is *not a private home*.



Although childcare centers are generally larger than childcare homes, they are not necessarily huge places. Centers may be large or small, and can be operated independently by a church or other organization. Sometimes childcare centers are called nursery schools or preschools. The state licenses Child Care Centers.

Source: Child Care Finder, a program of Children and Nutrition Services Inc., PO Box 2455 Casper, WY 82602
1-307-266-1236 or 1-800-578-4017
e-mail: cns@wyoming.com

What questions do parents need to ask?

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- ❖ Does the caregiver *really* like children?
 - ❖ Does the caregiver greet the children when they arrive?
 - ❖ Is the caregiver trained in CPR, first aid, and early childhood education?
 - ❖ Is the caregiver willing to answer your questions?
 - ❖ Will the caregiver tell you what your child is doing every day?
 - ❖ Are parents' ideas welcome?
 - ❖ Does the caregiver enjoy being with children all day?
 - ❖ Is there enough staff to serve the needs of each child?
 - ❖ Are the meals and snacks nutritious?
 - ❖ Are caregivers trained and experienced?
 - ❖ Is the environment clean, safe, and pleasant?
 - ❖ Is there enough space for resting, quiet play, and active play?
 - ❖ Is there a balance of play time, story time, activity time, and rest time?
 - ❖ Are the activities suitable for the ages of the children?
 - ❖ Are there enough toys, and are they clean and safe?
 - ❖ Do you agree with the discipline practices of the caregiver?
 - ❖ Do you hear the sounds of happy children there?
 - ❖ Will your child be happy there?

Take these steps to find quality childcare for your children:

1. Visit several childcare homes or centers. On each visit, think about your *first* impression: Are the other children happy? Does the place look safe? Is it clean and well lit? Do the caregivers enjoy talking and playing with children? Are there plenty of toys and learning materials?
2. Visit more than once. Go at a different time of day when you visit a second or third time. Consider the same questions asked in #1. If you have any doubts about the childcare center, listen to your gut feelings and cross it off your list.
3. When you visit, stay for more than just a few minutes. The longer you stay, (within reason) the better feel you will have for the kind of care your child will get. Even after you start using the childcare site, continue to make frequent visits.
4. Listen to the sounds of the children. Do they sound happy and involved? Do the caregivers sound cheerful and patient?
5. Count the number of children present. Count the number of staff members. A small number of children per adult is very important, especially for babies and toddlers.
6. Ask about the background and experience of the staff. Find out about the special training each one has and whether the program is accredited. Source: Child Care Aware, 1-800-424-2246 sponsored by Cheerios and Scholastic