

SELECTING HIGH QUALITY CHILD CARE FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS

1. Get Organized

Finding high quality child care is going to take a little homework. If possible, begin by gathering some basic information a couple months before you think you will need child care.

- Ask your friends and co-workers for recommendations.
- Check to see if your child is eligible for Early Head Start . For more information, contact the Head Start Program at 786-469-4622 or visit: http://www.miamidade.gov/CAA/head_start.asp
- To search for child care near you, please visit: <http://dcfsanswrite.state.fl.us/Childcare/provider/> or call Child Care Resource and Referral at 305-373-3521.

About Caregiver - Child Ratios

Babies and toddlers need to be cared for in small groups with caring, nurturing adults. The closer the caregiver-to-child ratio is to 1:1, the better. When caregivers are able to focus their attention on each baby or toddler in their care, it is easier for them to monitor safety, attend to individual needs, and promote child well being. In addition, smaller ratios increase the opportunities for the child to form a secure attachment to their caregiver. When a caregiver responds to a child's needs and forms a nurturing, secure relationship with that child, it positively affects the development of the baby's brain, impacting socio-emotional, language, and cognitive development.



OUR MISSION To promote high-quality school readiness, voluntary pre-kindergarten and after school programs, thus increasing all children's chances of achieving future educational success and becoming productive members of society. The Coalition seeks to further the physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs of Miami-Dade and Monroe County children with a priority toward the ages before birth through age 5.

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2. Conduct a Phone Interview

Save time and energy by using the phone to narrow your search. It is a good idea to contact at least three different caregivers. To get the best response, avoid calling at busy times such as arrival, departure, or lunch time.



	Caregiver / Center Name			
Availability	What ages are accepted?			
	Are there any openings?			
	Is there a waiting list?			
	Hours & Location			
	What are hours for full- or part-time care?			
	Is child care close to home?			
	Is child care close to work?			
Cost	When are fees due? How much?			
	Are there different fees for part-time or full-time care?			
	Do fees include formula or diapers?			
	Do fees include lunch and/or breakfast?			
	Is there still a charge when a child is sick or on vacation?			
	Are there extra fees — supply fees, late pickup fees?			
Quality Issues	Are you licensed by DCF?			
	Are you accredited? If so, by whom?			
	What is your caregiver/ child ratio?			
	What type of education or experience do caregivers have?			
	When can I visit the site?			



3. Visit the program

It is recommended that you visit at least three caregivers or child care programs. Do not rush, plan to spend some time with each one, at least an hour. Remember, this is where your baby is going to be cared for while he or she is not with you.

You should expect:

- a warm greeting
- short introductions to staff a brief tour
- an explanation of fees and policies
- an invitation to stay awhile to see the daily routine and children playing and learning

Questions you should ask

- Please describe a typical day.
- How do you discipline children?
- How do you handle nap times?
- How do you handle toilet training?
- What curriculum do you use?
- What types of play or learning activities do you have?
- Do you have Infant/ Child CPR and First Aid Training?
- What types of foods do you serve for meals and snacks?

4. Check References

Selecting a caregiver for your child is one of the most important decisions you will ever make. Don't be shy to ask each caregiver for at least two parent references and their phone numbers. Most parents will be happy to talk to you about their experience with the caregiver. Remember you will get information that you cannot gather any other way.

Parent # 1 _____

Parent # 2 _____

Make a Decision

Review the information you have gathered and call back if you have any questions that were not answered. Now that you know what high-quality infant toddler care should look like, it is OK to be choosy. If you are not comfortable with what you have found, keep looking.

When you select the caregiver for your child, try to plan ahead and ease your baby into the new child care situation. Remember that a strong attachment and relationship with a caregiver is very important for your baby's healthy development. If possible, plan to visit the new caregiver a few times per week for at least one month before your baby will begin the program. It is important for your baby to see that you are comfortable and happy around the new caregiver. Greet the new caregiver with a hug, so that your baby sees and feels the friendly greeting. After a few visits, let the caregiver begin to hold the baby a bit more and assume the care giving role or feeding, diapering and playing with the baby. Spending time with your baby and the new caregiver is the best gift you can give your baby whenever he or she will enter a new care giving situation.

During your visit,
use the High Quality Child Care
Checklist for Infants and Toddlers
located on the next page.

High Quality Child Care Checklist for Infant and Toddlers



LICENSING AND ACCREDITATION

- Up-to-date childcare license/registration
- Center is accredited by NAEYC or has at least Gold Seal Accreditation
- Staff to child ratios are kept at all times.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Space is clean, attractive, well lit, roomy and comfortable
- Space is safe and free of potential hazards
- Area is set up and labeled for each child's belongings
- Low barriers separate walking infants from those playing on the floor
- Toys and furniture in good shape
- Furniture and outdoor play equipment are sized for infants and toddlers
- Medicines and cleansers locked up
- Safety caps are on electrical outlets
- Safe, fenced, and litter free outdoor play areas
- First aid kit are in each classroom and are easy to reach
- First-aid trained staff member is at the center at all times
- Alternative exit for fire
- Frequent hand washing is encouraged for both children and staff

FEEDING ROUTINES

- Babies are held while being bottle-fed
- Children are fed according to their needs and schedules
- Bottles are kept in the refrigerator until needed
- Sippy cups and bottles are labeled with child's name
- Finger foods are encouraged for older infants and young toddlers

STAFF

- Children and families are greeted warmly upon arrival.
- There are opportunities for parents to share information or ask questions
- Staff have training on how children learn and grow, and have experience working with infants and toddlers
- Staff is friendly, nurturing, patient and positive.
- Staff talk to, laugh with and listen to children
- Staff use positive ways to guide children's behaviors and set limits for children that are appropriate for their age
- Staff comfort angry, sad or frightened children in a caring, supportive way

SLEEPING ROUTINES

- Infants are placed on their backs to sleep with firm bedding and no bottles, pillows, fluffy blankets or toys
- Children are allowed to nap according to their own needs
- Each child has his/her own crib
- Nap areas are well monitored, quiet, darkened and separate from active areas
- Bedding is changed and cleaned daily or more often as needed

DIAPERING AND TOILETING ROUTINES

- Diapering areas are located away from feeding areas
- Diapering and toilet areas are clean, well-ventilated and free from odor
- Diapers are changed when soiled, babies are cleaned well and a diapering chart is in place
- Changing table has a secure strap that holds baby safely and is used every time
- Caregivers talk, describe or sing to the child while he/she is being changed
- After each diaper change, the changing surface is disinfected
- Babies' and caregivers' hands are washed after each diaper change or use of toilet
- Toilet training begins only when a child is ready
- Toilet training is a positive, pleasant part of the day. Accidents are dealt with in a relaxed manner, not with disapproval or shame

FAMILY COMMUNICATIONS

- Notes are sent home daily about each child's eating, sleeping and diaper/toilet schedules
- Parents are asked to offer ideas and/or take part in the program
- Newsletters and information boards are used to keep families up to date

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

- Infants are out of their cribs when they are not asleep
- Caregivers play with, sing to, hold and cuddle each child often throughout the day
- There is enough room to move around safely and play with interesting things
- Infants can see a variety of colors, shapes and objects and can listen to music and other sounds
- Infants and toddlers are offered age-appropriate toys and materials that encourage learning . For example, art supplies, puzzles, books, musical instruments, and pretend play
- Caregivers talk, describe, read aloud to infants and toddlers throughout the day
- Caregivers ask and answer questions
- There are times and places to play quietly or actively
- There are times and places to play alone or with others



WARNING SIGNALS

**Center does not encourage parents to observe
Children are confined to swings, seats or cribs for more than thirty minutes
Babies are not held while being bottle-fed**