

Before you Visit: Interview by Phone

During the telephone interview, try to gather basic information about a program. Ask if it is a good time for the director, teacher, or provider to talk. If you feel comfortable with the responses and the basics of the program, set up an appointment to visit. Here are some questions you may want to ask:

- Are there vacancies for when you need care to begin?
- What is the total number of children attending the program?
- What is the general philosophy of the program?
- How is discipline handled? How are conflicts between children handled?
- What snacks or meals are provided, if any, and what kinds of foods are offered? If parents provide snacks or meals, what are the guidelines?
- How long has the program been in business?
- What are the fees? What do the fees include, and when is payment due?
- What are the hours of operation?
- Are there scholarships (subsidies or voucher programs) available?
- What kind of training do the providers have in first aid and CPR?

Center-specific questions:

- Does the center keep a waiting list? Is there a fee to get on it?
- How are the children divided into age groups? Which group would your child be in?
- What is the teacher-to-child ratio for your child's age group?
- Do children need to be toilet trained before entering the program (if applicable)?

Family Child Care Home-specific questions:

- What is the adult-to-child ratio? Who are the other people who might provide care to your child (e.g., aides)?
- What are the ages of the children currently in care in this program?
- Does the provider have children of her own as part of the group, either during the day or after school?
- What kind of training has the provider received in child development and/or early childhood education? Is she receiving ongoing training?
- What happens if the caregiver gets sick? Does she have alternate providers who can care for your child, or is it your responsibility to find back-up care?
- Are there pets in the home? What kind and how many? Are the children in contact with the animals?
- Does anyone in the home smoke?
- Are any firearms kept in the home? If so, how are they stored?
- Are there teens or other adults who will be present when your child is in the home? Who are they and when will they be present?
- What is the vacation and holiday policy?
- Is transportation provided?

School Age Program-specific questions:

- What are the hours of operation?
- Is transportation provided?
- Does the program keep a waiting list?
- What is the adult-to-child ratio?
- How many children are enrolled in the program?

- How are the children divided into groups? What group would your child be in?
- What types of activities are offered?
- How is discipline handled?

Summer Camp-specific questions:

- How long has the camp been in business?
- What are the hours of operation?
- Is it a boys, girls, or coed camp?
- What is the total number of campers attending during the summer?
- What is the ratio of counselors to campers?
- What type of training do counselors receive?
- What are the ages of the campers?
- What sessions are offered during the summer?
- Is transportation provided?
- Do they children travel on field trips? How are they transported?