Child Care Checklist

The Caregiver

- Is warm and friendly.
- Is easy to talk to.
- Encourages parents to visit.
- Is responsive, supportive and sensitive to children and their needs.
- Treats each child as an individual.
- Helps children learn to get along with and respect others.
- Explains rules clearly and reinforces positive behavior.
- Has acceptable ideas concerning discipline and child rearing.

The Environment

- Is clean, cheerful and comfortable.
- Has good light, heat and ventilation.
- Has varied kinds of space for quiet play, active play and outdoor play.
- Has enough books, paints, blocks, musical toys, games and puzzles.
- Has a place for each child's personal belongings.
- Is safe and free of hazards and has:
  - *First aid supplies,*
  - *Emergency exits,*
  - *Posted emergency phone numbers,*
  - *Fire extinguishers,*
  - *No sharp edges on furniture, and*
  - *Covered wall sockets.*

Learning Opportunities

- Are the children respected as individuals?
- Is there a variety of toys and equipment for each child's development level?
- Are there learning opportunities suitable for the different ages of the children?
- How much television is used and what programs are watched?
- Are there policies regarding nutrition, toileting, napping and discipline?
- Does the program accept and respect your family's cultural values?
- Is there a daily plan of activities?

Overall

- I feel comfortable.
- The references checked out.
- The license was made available.
- The program is accredited.

Other Notes:

Compliments of

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Child Care

ABCs of Choosing Child Care

A SK YOURSELF SOME QUESTIONS: What will I need in terms of location and hours? What will my child need physically, emotionally, socially and educationally? What size group do I prefer for my child? What can I afford?

B Y GATHERING REFERRALS FROM your local resource and referral agency, you'll be prepared to begin looking for child care that's best suited for you and your child. Be sure you visit more than one provider. Visit when children are present, and take your child. Ask for at least two references, and check them before making a final decision. A check list is provided at the end of this pamphlet to help you during your visit.

C HILDREN, LIKE ADULTS, NEED TIME to adjust to new situations. Once you've made a decision, try to prepare your child for the change from home to child care. Here are some ideas to help make the transition easier for you and your child:

- *Talk about where you are going and why.*
- *Visit the facility together before child care begins.*
- *Allow your child to bring along a favorite toy or blanket.*
- *When you leave, let your child know you are going, never sneak away.*
- *Teach your child to follow the rules.*
- *Remember, if you're enthusiastic, chances are your child will be too.*

License Requirement

Most California child-care centers are licensed by the Department of Social Services. Licensing is intended to ensure a minimal standard of health and safety protection for children. Licensing, however, does not guarantee the quality of a child-care center or home. Additionally, many important areas of child care, such as curriculum guidelines, staff training, parental participation, cultural awareness and decision-making are not addressed by licensing.

Types of Child Care

Licensed Family Day Care Homes

This care takes place in someone else's home and offers a small group setting for your child. State licensees may offer care for a maximum of six children, including their own children under age twelve. No more than three of the children may be infants (birth to two years of age). When there is an assistant caregiver, the maximum is twelve children, and no more than four may be infants.

Licensed Child Day Care Centers

Child-care centers, nursery schools, Head Start programs, parent cooperatives and pre-schools are center-based programs that will care for your child in groups of 12 or more. These programs vary in the number of hours children are in care, the type of learning environments they offer, and the specific goals of the programs.

State law requires at least one adult for every 12 preschool-age children or every four infants. When selecting a center for your child, the most important factors to consider are the ratio of children to adults and the qualifications and experience of the staff.

In-Home Child Care

In-home child care includes babysitters or nannies hired by a parent to care for the child in the parent's home. Specific tax and employment rules apply to this type of care.

Exempt Child Care

Exempt child care refers to caregivers who are not required to have a background in providing child care. These caregivers have not had their backgrounds' checked for criminal or child-abuse activities. Exempt child care includes:

- *A person hired to care for your child at home;*
- *A family child-care home that cares for children from one family only;*
- *"Drop-in" arrangements, such as those provided in a health club or supermarket;*
- *Certain recreation programs such as summer camp;*
- *Child-care programs run by a school district; and*
- *Care given by a relative or guardian.*

Trustline Background Check

For a fee, prospective caregivers' backgrounds are checked against the state's criminal and child-abuse records. Once they've cleared the background check, their names are put on the **TRUSTLINE** registry. To check a name on the registry, or to receive more information on this service, parents should call **1-800-822-8490**.

California Child Care Resource and Referral Network
State Funded Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies:

Child Action Now • (916) 369-0191
www.childaction.org

Sacramento Kids • (916) 760-8790
www.sacramentokids.com/

Department of Social Services, Community Care Licensing Division • (916) 229-4500
www.ccld.ca.gov/

When Choosing a Child Care Center, Visit the Location and Talk With the Director.

Ask the Director these questions:

1. What is the cost of care, and when is payment due?
2. Is there a charge if you are late picking up your child?
3. What do you need to bring for your child?
4. What are the grounds, notice and payment requirements for ending your child-care arrangement?
5. What is the provider's philosophy on discipline?
6. Will the caregivers you observe actually be the ones caring for your child?
7. How long has each caregiver been with the center? (Make sure there is not a high turnover rate, since children are more likely to thrive with consistent care.)
8. What qualifications does the director look for when hiring staff?
9. How many children will be in your child's group? How many caregivers will be regularly present?
10. What is the policy on illness?
11. Is there staff with training in first aid? (There should be.) What physician or hospital emergency room does the center use if immediate medical care is necessary?