

## **CHOOSING A CHILD CARE PROVIDER**

### **Questions to Ask and Things to Look for**

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After you decide what type of care you need and have names of potential providers, you can begin the interview and selection process. You may choose to look at several places in your community, or near your work. Call each program and ask some questions over the phone before you decide which to visit. The most important step in selecting child care is a personal visit to the program or home. Don't consider making a decision without meeting the people who will be caring for your child. Ask for names of other parents as references. Listed below are:

- 1) Sample questions to ask over the phone, and
- 2) Things to look for when you visit

#### **Questions to ask by phone before you decide which programs to visit:**

- Is the program licensed? For how many children? What are the ages of the children my child will be with?
- What is the daily program for the children: schedule, goals of the program, indoor and outdoor activities?
- What are the program hours? What happens if I am late for pick-up or early for drop-off? Is there a fee?
- What is the cost of care? Does the fee include meals, snacks, diapers, etc?
- Is tuition assistance offered? Does the provider accept vouchers, or are there contracted slots, or sliding scale fees? Are there any scholarship programs or a sibling discount?
- Is the location convenient? If necessary, is a subway or bus stop nearby?
- Is it a nine-month or a year-round program? Are there vacation weeks, holidays or other times when the program will be closed? Is tuition payment required when a child is on vacation?
- How many teachers and assistants are in your program? What are their qualifications? What languages do the staff members speak? How long have teachers been on staff?
- What is the policy for sick children? Do I pay tuition if the child is sick?
- If your child has special needs, you should ask about any special services that will be provided.

## **When you visit a program, observe . . .**

### *The caregivers or teachers*

- Do they seem friendly and caring?
- How do they interact with children? Do you like what you see?
- Do they respect the children and appreciate their abilities and cultures?
- Does anyone speak your child's language?
- How do they respond when children seem unhappy? How do they respond when children have disputes?

### *The Children*

- Do the children seem happy and involved in the activities and with other children?
- Can they choose their own activities?
- Are they able to do both quiet activities and physical activities?
- Do the children all sleep at the same time or can they sleep on their own schedule?
- Do you think your child will be happy in this environment?

### *Other questions to keep in mind*

- Is the space safe, clean and comfortable, inside and out?
- Is the space organized so children can do different things in groups, pairs or by themselves?
- What games, toys and other equipment are here? Are they in good condition?
- Are there enough adults to care for the number of children you see?
- Are parents invited to participate in daily activities or are there other opportunities for parents to be involved?
- What is the policy on discipline?

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