



*Visit the child care facility unannounced before and after you choose a provider.*

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## Child care

### Selecting a child care provider

Choosing a child care provider is one of the most important decisions you will have to make as a parent. Child care experiences have a tremendous influence on the growth and development of your child. High-quality child care can improve a child's learning and social skills.

Parents need to take the time necessary to find quality child care and consider the different types of care available.

When choosing a child care provider, it is important to look at all aspects of the caregiver, including how your child reacts to the caregiver.

### What parents can do

- Determine which type of provider situation you want for your child:
  1. Group based care in an institutional setting like a child care center. These settings must be licensed and credentialed by the state of Wisconsin.
  2. In-home care providers. These settings may be licensed, but need not be if they don't exceed a certain number of children in care.
- Talk to friends, relatives, neighbors, doctors and nurses to see if they can refer you to a child care provider. Referrals from people you trust is the best way to find quality child care. Alternatively, you may go through a child care resource and referral agency in your area. For a small fee, they will give you a list of child care providers with openings in the geographic area you designate.
- Once you have selected a few providers, interview them and ask a lot of questions. You will need to know their views on discipline and how they interact with children. You will also want to know what type of educational background and certification the provider has. Ask for several references and call them.
- Visit the child care facility several times and look for potential safety hazards. Is this a place that you would like your child to be?
- Take your child with you on a visit and see how the provider interacts with your child. Sometimes child care providers are very good, but clash with your child's personality.
- Visit the child care facility unannounced before and after you choose a provider. Unexpected visits will give you an idea about how the facility is run when you are not there.
- Once a child care provider is selected, maintain open communication with the provider on a daily basis.
- Talk to your children about their child care providers and respond to any concerns that your child may have. Observe how your child reacts to the caregiver.
- Establish a backup plan. It is important to know about five people who could watch your child in the event your child care provider is unavailable. There are many drop-in day care centers that are available on a first come, first serve basis.