Program Name / Phone:
Contact Person:

Checklist for Early Childhood Education Programs

Fill out a checklist for each program or center you are considering and then compare the results. There is room to answer questions and jot down notes. These notes can be helpful when comparing programs days or weeks after your visits. Before starting, take some time to look over this list and add or change questions to address your specific needs and those of your child.

Before You Go	***Notes***
Questions to Ask	
❑ How many children are served? What ages?	
❑ Is there space available right now? Is there a waitlist?	
❑ What are the hours?	
❑ What are the fees?	
❑ What is the program's guiding philosophy?	
❑ Are children grouped by age or in mixed-age groups?	
Things to Observe	
❑ Is the director open and friendly on the phone?	
❑ Does he/she encourage visits to the school?	
The Environment	
Questions to Ask	
❑ What outdoor space(s) are used? (Public park? Private playground?)	
❑ How often do children go outside?	
❑ What happens in the event of bad weather?	
❑ Do children go on community field trips?	
❑ Are there any animals in the classrooms?	
Things to Observe	
❑ Is there enough room for children to play safely?	
❑ Are the decorations cheerful and bright without feeling overwhelming?	
❑ Is children's original work displayed? Is it at children's eye level?	
❑ Are the available activities and materials varied and developmentally appropriate?	

❑ Do the materials and decorations support diversity?	
❑ Can children reach toys without help?	
❑ Does everything look clean and well cared for?	
The Teachers	
Questions to Ask	
❑ What education/experience do the teachers have regarding young children?	
❑ Is the staff trained in CPR/first aid?	
❑ How long have the teachers and staff members worked with the program? In early childhood?	
❑ How does the program select new teachers?	
Things to Observe	
❑ Does the ratio of children to adults meet Department of Health codes?	
❑ Do teachers speak to children warmly and with respect?	
❑ Do they seem to know the children and the program's routines well?	
❑ Do they get down on the floor and interact with children at their level?	
❑ Do teachers interact with adults (parents and one another) in a positive manner?	
Policies and Practices	
Questions to Ask	
❑ Are there sign-in/out procedures?	
❑ Is there an open door policy? Can parents visit at any time?	
❑ How does the center address parent-child separation?	
❑ What is the daily schedule? Do all classes follow a set curriculum? What is the curriculum?	
❑ What happens when a child is sick or injured?	
❑ What happens when a child misbehaves? Are there clear discipline procedures?	
❑ Are there established routines for eating, changing diapers, napping and cleaning up?	
❑ Are snacks, meals, and/or diapers provided?	
❑ Is there a contract that outlines fees?	

❑ Is financial assistance available? Sibling discount?	
Things to Observe	
❑ Is the schedule posted in a kid-friendly way? Do children seem to know the routines?	
❑ Are policies posted? (i.e. parent bulletin board, website, leaflets)	
❑ Do you see teachers and children following procedures and routines?	
Health and Safety	
Questions to Ask	
❑ Are children supervised at all times? Even when napping?	
❑ Are practice fire drills performed on a regular basis?	
❑ Are you authorized to dispense medication?	
Things to Observe	
❑ Are outlets covered? Are windows, doors, cabinets and stairs appropriately secured?	
❑ Are there signs posted about hand washing procedures?	
❑ Do you see children washing their hands before eating or after playing outside?	
❑ Are emergency procedures posted?	
Communication	
Questions to Ask	
❑ How do teachers maintain contact with parents? (conversation, written communication, conferences)	
❑ Are teachers willing to accommodate requests for meetings or phone calls?	
❑ Does the program require that parents dedicate time or service?	
❑ Are there occasions or events where parents can interact with one another?	
❑ Are the teachers willing to give you the contact information of several parents to speak to as references?	