Support for Your Child Care Search

- STEPS TO FINDING THE BEST CHILD CARE FOR YOUR FAMILY
- CHECKING OUT YOUR OPTIONS
- DELAWARE LICENSING REGULATIONS
- CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS
- DELAWARE STARS FOR EARLY SUCCESS
- FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR CHILD CARE
- THE PARENT/PROVIDER RELATIONSHIP

Special Care Situations

- SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SUMMER CHILD CARE
- SCHOOL AGE CHILD CARE NEEDS
STEPS TO FINDING THE BEST CHILD CARE FOR YOUR FAMILY

STEP ONE: Gather a list of potential child care providers

Contact Children & Families First Child Care Referral Service (AccessCare) for a list of licensed child care providers located close to home, work or in between.
- CALL 1-800-734-2388
- VISIT cffde.org/accesscare
- NARROW your search by calling child care centers and family child care homes to determine if they have openings, fees, etc.

STEP TWO: Schedule Visits and Ask Questions

- OBSERVE space and materials
- OBSERVE interactions between the teachers and children
- ASK questions

STEP THREE: Decide

- THINK about what you saw and the information you gathered at each visit and make the best choice for your family.
- CALL provider to complete enrollment.

STEP FOUR: Follow up

- COMMUNICATE regularly with your child care provider
- ADDRESS concerns as soon as possible
Checking Out Your Options

There are pros and cons associated with each type of care. The following provides you with comparisons at a glance:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child Care Center</th>
<th>Family Child Care</th>
<th>In-Home Care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Similar ages grouped together</td>
<td>Mixed ages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larger groups of children</td>
<td>Small groups of children</td>
<td>Less social contact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-like atmosphere</td>
<td>Home-like atmosphere</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training required</td>
<td>Training required</td>
<td>No training or licensing required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest risk of exposure to illness</td>
<td>Less risk of exposure to illness</td>
<td>Lowest risk of exposure to illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most opportunity for public observation and monitoring</td>
<td>Less opportunity for public observation and monitoring</td>
<td>No opportunity for public observation and monitoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple staff members to cover illnesses and vacation</td>
<td>Limited staff members to cover illnesses and vacations</td>
<td>No back up staff to cover illnesses or vacations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating hours are not flexible</td>
<td>More flexibility for individual schedules</td>
<td>Most flexibility for individual schedules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highest staff turnover</td>
<td>Consistent primary caregivers</td>
<td>Consistent primary caregivers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Licensing requires that basic safety and health standards be followed. If you have questions or concerns about a provider meeting standards or you would like to read about a child care provider’s record with the Office of Child Care Licensing you can visit their website; http://kids.delaware.gov/occl/occl.shtml, or contact the office in your county:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Castle County</th>
<th>Kent and Sussex Counties</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DSCYF/Office of Child Care Licensing</td>
<td>DSCYF/Office of Child Care Licensing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3411 Silverside Road</td>
<td>821 Silver Lake Boulevard, Suite 103, Dover, DE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concord Plaza, Hagley Building</td>
<td>19904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilmington, DE 19810</td>
<td>302-739-5487 or 1-800-822-2236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>302-892-5800</td>
<td>FAX: 302-739-6589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAX: 302-633-5112</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Keep in mind if you use unlicensed care that should be licensed in your state, you cannot take it as a tax deduction.

Quality of care will vary. As a parent you will have your own standards. Deciding which program is best for your child and family is up to you. It’s very important for you to visit the facility, observe and ask questions. Provider names given through Children & Families First are referrals only, not recommendations. Licensed centers and family child care providers have the opportunity to participate in Delaware Stars for Early Success quality rating and improvement system and/or become accredited. The Stars and accreditation status of a program is one way you can obtain information on the quality of care being provided.

For more information on Delaware Stars or accreditation visit the following websites:

**Delaware Stars for Early Success**: A voluntary quality rating and improvement system that assesses improves and rates the quality of early care and education and school age settings. www.delawarestars.udel.edu or www.greatstartsde.org.

**National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**: Accredits center-based, part day preschools and head start programs. www.naeyc.org

**National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC)**: Accredits family child care providers. http://www.nafcc.org/

**National AfterSchool Association (NAA)**: Accredits school age before and after school programs. http://naaweb.org/
Delaware Licensing Regulations

The Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families licenses child care centers (Early Care and Education and School-Age Centers), large family child care homes, and family child care homes. The standards set by the state are a minimum, which ensure certain safeguards necessary for the child's growth and development. It is each family's responsibility to select a program that meets their own particular standards.

The following child care programs do not have to be licensed however; they should have an Exemption Letter from the Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL) as proof of their status.

- Camps with permits from public health;
- Programs run by the State of Delaware;
- Vacation bible schools;
- Programs that have onsite child care where parents do not leave;
- Programs for school-age children that teach lessons, for example, dancing, karate, or painting;
- Programs run by schools registered with the Department of Education that provide regular instruction through 6th grade.

For programs that must be licensed, here are the basic requirements for all three types of care (Early Care and Education and School-Age Centers, Large Family Child Care Homes and Family Child Care Homes).

- Staff must be qualified and complete specified annual professional development hours.
- There must be adequate indoor and outdoor space. Sleeping and storage space must be provided for each child.
- There must be varied age-appropriate activities, supplies and equipment.
- Positive behavior management techniques must be used. No physical punishments are permitted.
- Smoking in all areas where children will be present is prohibited.
- Health exams and up to date immunizations of each child are required before enrollment.
- Sick children must be excluded from care (except for centers that have a designated sick care program).
- Training on First Aid and Infant/Child CPR is required.

Early Care and Education and School-Age Centers include day care centers, preschools, and before/after school care in a commercial setting for thirteen or more children.

- All staff qualified to be solely responsible for children must be at least 18 years old, have a high school diploma, have a minimum of six months of experience with children birth through second grade in a group setting and have met education/training requirements.
- All child care staff must complete annual professional development hours.
- Staff to child ratios and maximum group sized must be maintained for the youngest child present.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Child</th>
<th>Minimum Staff/Child Ratio</th>
<th>Maximum Group Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infant (under 1 year)</td>
<td>1:4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Toddler (1 to 2 years)</td>
<td>1:6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Toddler (2 to 3 years)</td>
<td>1:8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young Preschool Child (3 to 4 years)</td>
<td>1:10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Older Preschool Child (4 to 5+ years &amp; Not yet attending kindergarten)</td>
<td>1:12</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School-Age Child (5+ years &amp; attending elementary school)</td>
<td>1:15</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Large family child care homes typically care for more than seven children preschool age and younger in a home setting:

- All large family child care licensees must be at least 21 years old, have at least a high school diploma, have at least 24 months experience working with children in a group setting, meet education/training requirements and obtain background checks and health appraisals for all members of the household and staff who are 18 or older.
- All large family child care staff must be at least 18 years old, have at least a high school diploma.
- All large family child care staff must complete annual professional development hours.
- Have at least two caregivers and care for twelve or less preschool age and younger (the exact number of children allowed depends on the ages of all children present during day care hours. See the full regulations for more information).

Family child care providers care for children in their own home. There are two levels of family child care providers:

- Level I providers may care for no more than four children preschool age or younger (including the children who live in the home) and two school age children. OR no more than five children preschool age or younger (including children who live in the home) with no school age children. The exact number of children allowed depends on the ages of all children present during day care hours. See the full regulations for more information.
- Level II providers have more training and experience and therefore may care for more children. A Level II provider may care for no more than six children preschool age or younger plus three school age children (including children who live in the home and are not yet enrolled in school). The exact number of children allowed depends on the ages of all children present during day care hours. See the full regulations for more information.
- All family child care providers must be at least 18 years old, obtain background checks and health appraisals for all members of the household who are 18 or older, and attend a six hour orientation/training session with state licensing staff and complete annual professional development hours.

This sheet includes highlights; full regulations are available from the Office of Child Care Licensing. Website: http://kids.delaware.gov/occl/occl.shtml Email: (occl.dscyf@state.de.us)

<table>
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FAX: 302-739-6589 |

Please contact Children & Families First if you have any questions. We can be reached at 800-734-2388 or visit our website www.cffde.org

Updated 9/30/16
Checklist for Parents

Basic Information

☐ The hours of operation fit my needs.
☐ I can afford the fees.
☐ The program is licensed.

Environment

☐ The place is clean and well-maintained.
☐ The setting is bright, cheerful and smells okay.
☐ The facility is safe. (Areas are easy to supervise, hazardous cleaning materials are out of reach, electrical outlets are covered, furniture is sturdy, etc.)
☐ There is a plan for emergencies and first aid kits are readily available.
☐ There is enough space for a variety of activities (indoor/outdoor, nap, diapering, eating, etc.)
☐ There is a place for children's personal belongings.

Teaching Staff

☐ Teaching staff has adequate training and experience with children.
☐ There are enough teachers to give individual attention and cover when absences/illnesses occur.
☐ Positive behavior management techniques are used. (Hint: Limits are consistent and gentle. Children are given choices.)
☐ The teacher and children seems to like each other and be happy.
☐ The teacher is warm, friendly and patient.
☐ The teacher offers appropriate physical comfort in a loving and caring way. (For example holding young children, hugs, holding hands, etc.)
☐ The teacher is actively involved with the children throughout the day.
☐ The teacher understands what is developmentally appropriate for children of different ages.
☐ The teacher responds quickly to children's needs.

Program

☐ There is a written daily schedule posted that shows a balanced daily routine. There are active/quiet times, indoor/outdoor times, with varied and age-appropriate activities.
☐ There are times children work as a group and times when they can be alone.
☐ The schedule can be adjusted as needed to accommodate the children's needs and moods.

continued...
There are enough safe, appropriate toys and equipment within reach of the children.

Boys and girls are equally encouraged to participate in a variety of activities.

The number of teachers with each group of children allow for personal attention to be given to each child.

**Parental Involvement**

- Parents can make unannounced visits at any time.
- Parents can speak with the provider when they have questions or concerns.
- There is a system of regular communication sent home to inform the parents about the child's experiences during child care.
- Parents meet with the provider on a regular basis to discuss progress and goals.

**Infant/Toddler Considerations**

- There are quiet individualized places for children to sleep when needed.
- Feeding and diapering routines are done in a loving, patient manner.
- Diapers are frequently checked and changed.
- Diapering area is clean.
- Babies have space and freedom to play, climb and crawl.
- Teaching staff responds quickly and appropriately to crying.

**School-Age Considerations**

- I am comfortable with the transportation arrangements to and from school.
- There is quiet space and time allowed for homework.
- There is freedom and flexibility after a structured school day.

**Final Considerations**

- References from parents are available.
- I would be happy here if I were a child.
- I feel comfortable leaving my child here.

**Additional Notes:**

Updated 10/4/16
Delaware Stars for Early Success

What is Delaware Stars for Early Success?

Delaware Stars for Early Success is a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). A QRIS is used to assess, improve and communicate the level of quality in early care and education and school-age settings. Participation in Delaware Stars is voluntary and demonstrates a program’s commitment to continuous quality improvement. Delaware Stars is a five-tiered rating system. Programs begin with “Starting with Stars,” and then are rated at a Star Level 2 through 5.

Descriptions of Star levels

Ratings for Delaware Stars are based on successful verification that the program meets high quality standards in four areas: Family and Community Partnerships, Qualifications and Professional Development, Management and Administration, and Learning Environment and Curriculum (this includes a formal assessment of classrooms in each age group using the Environment Rating Scales or ERS. The ERS is an internationally recognized valid and reliable observational tool used in research and evaluation).

- **Star Level 1 “Starting with Stars”** - Programs are this first level of participation are in good standing with the Office of Child Care Licensing and are completing orientation through staff professional development, environment scans and developing an initial quality improvement plan.
- **Star Level 2** – Programs at Star Level 2 have begun their active pursuit of continuous quality improvement.
- **Star Level 3** - To reach a Star Level 3, a program must earn 40-59 quality points by verifying standards of their choice and achieve a minimum score of a 3.4 on each ERS assessment.
- **Star Level 4** - To reach a Star Level 4, a program must earn 60-79 quality points by verifying standards of their choice and essential standards covering the following topics; developmental screenings, formative assessments, curriculum planning and staff training. Classrooms must achieve a minimum score of 4.4 on ERS assessments.
- **Star Level 5** - To reach a Star Level 5, the highest level of achievement, a program must earn 80-100 quality points by verifying standards of their choice and essential standards covering the following topics; developmental screenings, formative assessments, curriculum planning and staff training. Classrooms must achieve a minimum score of 5.4 on ERS assessments.

Alternative Pathways

- Programs accredited by the National Association of Young Children are designated Star Level 5 once accepted into Delaware Stars due to the difficulty of obtaining and maintaining this accreditation.
- Head Start programs and state funded Early Childhood Assistance Programs (ECAP) are designated Star Level 4 once accepted into Delaware Stars due to monitoring of federal and state performance standards. In order to advance to a Star Level 5, these programs must score a minimum of 5.4 on each ERS classroom assessment.

For more information, visit delawarestars.udel.edu.

Updated 9/30/16
Financial Assistance for Child Care

Are you having trouble affording child care?
Help is available for those who qualify through Purchase of Care.
Apply online through Delaware ASSIST using your computer or smart phone
https://assist.dhss.delaware.gov/
or visit the local office that serves your zip code.

NEW CASTLE COUNTY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Zip codes served</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appoquinimink State Service</td>
<td>19706, 19709, 19730, 19731, 19733, 19734</td>
<td>122 Silver Lake Road Middletown, DE 19709</td>
<td>(302) 378-5781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canby Park Office</td>
<td>19805, 19806, 19807</td>
<td>1920 Maryland Ave, Wilmington, DE 19805</td>
<td>(302) 498-5500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churchman’s Corporate Center</td>
<td>19720, 19850</td>
<td>84 Christiana Road New Castle, DE 19720</td>
<td>(800) 372-2022</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claymont State Service Center</td>
<td>19703, 19710, 19732, 19735, 19803, 19810</td>
<td>3301 Green Street Claymont, DE 19703</td>
<td>(302) 798-4093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeLaWarr State Service Center</td>
<td>19720 N. of I-295, 19801 S. of Christina River</td>
<td>500 Rogers Road New Castle, DE 19720</td>
<td>(302) 577-3814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hudson State Service Center</td>
<td>19702, 19707, 19711, 19714, 19716, 19717, 19736, 19808</td>
<td>501 Ogleton Road Newark, DE 19711</td>
<td>(302) 283-7500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northeast State Service Center</td>
<td>19801 E. of Market Street and above</td>
<td>1624 Jessup Street Wilmington, DE 19802</td>
<td>(302) 552-3530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Porter State Service Center</td>
<td>19801 W. of Market Street and above</td>
<td>509 W. 8th Street Wilmington, DE 19801</td>
<td>(302) 777-2830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robscott Building</td>
<td>19712, 19715, 19708, 19713, 19808</td>
<td>153 East Chestnut Hill Rd. Newark, DE 19713</td>
<td>(302) 368-6610</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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For information on child care providers who accept Purchase of Care or offer other financial assistance options contact Children & Families First’s Child Care Referral Service (AccessCare) (800) 734-2388 or http://www.cffde.org/accesscare
## Financial Assistance for Child Care

Are you having trouble affording child care? Help is available for those who qualify through Purchase of Care. Apply online through Delaware ASSIST using your computer or smart phone [https://assist.dhss.delaware.gov/](https://assist.dhss.delaware.gov/) or visit the local office that serves your zip code.

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<th>Phone number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bridgeville State Service Center</td>
<td>19933</td>
<td>400 Mill Streets Bridgeville, DE 19933</td>
<td>(302) 337-8261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Hen Corporate Center</td>
<td>Last Names A-Q in the following zip codes: 19901, 19903, 19904, 19934, 19936, 19938, 19943, 19946, 19952, 19953, 19955, 19961, 19962, 19964, 19977, 19979, 19980</td>
<td>655 Bay Road Dover, DE 19901</td>
<td>(302) 672-9500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adams State Service Center</td>
<td>19947, 19951, 19958, 19966, 19968, 19968, 19971</td>
<td>546 S. Bedford Street Georgetown, DE 19947</td>
<td>(302) 515-3080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurel State Service Center</td>
<td>19931, 19940, 19956</td>
<td>31039 North Poplar St. Laurel, DE 19956</td>
<td>(302) 875-2280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milford Annex</td>
<td>19941, 19950, 19954, 19960, 19963</td>
<td>13 S. W. Front Street Milford, DE 19963</td>
<td>(302) 424-7250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyle State Service Center</td>
<td>19930, 19939, 19944, 19945, 19967, 19970, 19975</td>
<td>34314 Pyle Center Road Frankford, DE 19945</td>
<td>(302) 732-9504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shipley State Service Center</td>
<td>19973</td>
<td>350 Virginia Ave. Seaford, DE 19973</td>
<td>(302) 628-2011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smyrna State Service Center</td>
<td>19936, 19938, 19955, 19977</td>
<td>200 South DuPont Blvd. Suite 101 Smyrna, DE 19977</td>
<td>(302) 514-4500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williams State Service Center</td>
<td>Last Names R-Z in the following zip codes: 19901, 19903, 19904, 19934, 19936, 19938, 19943, 19946, 19952, 19953, 19955, 19961, 19962, 19964, 19977, 19979, 19980</td>
<td></td>
<td>302-857-5000</td>
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Remaining involved in the daily care of your child is important. Child care works best for everyone when a good, trusting relationship is developed between the family and child care provider. In a healthy parent/provider relationship, both parties are honest, show mutual respect, and use open communication. Here are some examples of ways this can be accomplished by parents and providers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Provider</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be honest about how you believe the arrangement is working</td>
<td>Don’t make commitments that cannot be kept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show trust by asking questions rather than jumping to conclusions if a problem arises</td>
<td>Never cover up problems or accidents that occur.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect the provider’s choice of profession and view them as a professional</td>
<td>Respect the parent’s choice to work outside the home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be clear in explaining wished and expectations.</td>
<td>Encourage parents to ask questions and ask questions of the parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share information on routines, preferences, problems and progress.</td>
<td>Provide regular updates on the children’s development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expect open access to the child care setting during operating hours.</td>
<td>Offer open access to the child care setting during all operating hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expect precautions are taken to keep children safe.</td>
<td>Abide by the parent’s wishes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow through on all agreements, such as, picking children up and paying tuition on time.</td>
<td>Expect parents to follow through on all agreements, such as, picking up children and paying on time.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Compromise and open communication are essential in making any child care arrangement successful. A partnership between parents and child care providers doesn’t just happen; it takes effort and practice that is worth it to provide the best possible care for children.
Choosing summer child care arrangements can be difficult. Selecting and monitoring a quality program that is right for your child is a greater responsibility for parents because summer camps are not required to be licensed. However, state law does require that summer camps must complete background checks on all employees. Always ask questions and look closely at the facilities. The following are some things to consider during your search.

**CAMP PHILOSOPHY**
- Does the program philosophy match your child’s interests?
- Are a variety of activities offered?
- Is there a balance between periods of activity and rest?
- Even specialized programs, such as, sports or computer camps, should offer opportunities for socialization and other activities.

**THE ENVIRONMENT**
- Is there sufficient safe space which is fenced or clearly defined?
- Are restrooms clean and easily accessible?
- Is shade available outdoors? Is there access to indoor space in the event of inclement weather?
- Is there access to drinking water?
- Are appropriate food storage procedures used?

**COMPATIBILITY WITH YOUR NEEDS**
- Ages of children and how are they separated into groups?
- Does the camp run for the entire summer? Are all the dates that you need covered?
- What are the hours of operation? Is before and after care available for an additional cost?
- Do you need to pack lunch or other supplies?
- Are new activities offered in each session or does it repeat?
- Can they accommodate any special needs your child may have such as, allergies, physical limitations, etc.?

**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**
- What are the staff/child ratios? Are groups assigned to primary staff members?
- Are staff members trained in first aid and CPR?
- Are state, federal and child abuse registry searches completed on all staff and volunteers who have access to children?
- Does staff have access to telephones?
- What are the drop off and pick up procedures? Are the organized and safe?
- Is there communication between the staff and families?

**TRANSITIONING TO SUMMER CAMP**
Once you have selected an appropriate program for your child, you can help them adjust to the new setting. It is normal for children to be anxious about new things. Discuss the upcoming change in a positive way by emphasizing the fun aspects, if possible visit the site and meet the staff. Consider including your child in the decision or enrolling them with other children they are comfortable with to make the adjustment easier.
School-Age Child Care Needs

Each family’s need for child care of their school aged children can vary greatly. Quality school-age child care programs are neither an extension of the school day nor meant to only keep children out of harm’s way. Rather, they should provide children with a comfortable environment and a great deal of freedom to move about and choose age-appropriate activities. Programs should include space and time for outdoor play, quiet time, homework and socializing with peers. Staff should understand older children have different interests, abilities and strong desires to regulate their own behavior.

When choosing child care for school-aged children consider:

When care is needed...
- Before and/or after school hours that match your needs
- In-service days
- Half days
- School vacation days

The type of setting you prefer...
- Child care centers
- Family child care providers
- Public and private schools
- Religious organizations
- Community agencies

The cost of the program...  *cost is not necessarily an indication of quality*
- Is the cost within your family’s budget?
- Is financial assistance available? (ex. sibling discounts, tuition assistance, etc.)
- Do you qualify for Purchase of Care? Does the program accept Purchase of Care?

The schedule and activities
- Does the schedule allot for indoor and outdoor play?
- Are snacks/meals included?
- Is time set aside for homework? Are staff members available if the children need help?
- Are there opportunities for individual, small group and whole group activities?
- Are the children offered choices?

Updated 12/22/16