



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

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Tips For Selecting Quality Day Care

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Quality child care can assist parents in building their children's self esteem, teach them how to get along with others and encourage them to explore the world around them. Quality programs also provide a warm, nurturing environment where children feel secure and comfortable. Some excellent programs have only a few children and are run from the provider's home. Other fine programs have many children and are located in large centers. Finding the right program for you and your child may be hard work, but it's worth the effort.

As mentioned, child care comes in all shapes and sizes. Day care centers provide care for more than six children at a time in a designated facility, not in a provider's home. Family day care homes provide care for up to six children at a time in a residence. Group family day care homes provide care for up to twelve children at a time in a residence. School-age child care programs provide care for more than six children during non-school hours. Informal care is care for one or two children at a time in addition to the provider's children, usually in the provider's home. You may also find care through nursery schools, head start centers and pre-kindergarten programs.

Choosing the right program or provider is not only important for the happiness and well-being of your child, but for you as well. Knowing that your child is safe and well cared for while you work will give you the peace of mind that you deserve. One of the first things you should do when looking for day care is to talk to friends, neighbors and relatives in your community. They may be able to recommend good day care providers or share their own experiences.

Selecting a program that is registered or licensed by New York State will help to ensure your child is receiving safe, quality care. Providers who are licensed by the state have attended child care training workshops and have had their child care sites inspected to assure safety. With only a few exceptions, every program that cares for more than two children for more than three hours a day must have a license or registration certificate.

The cost of child care is another major consideration. Financial assistance exists in various forms – subsidies, government tax credits and employer supported benefits. In general, families are eligible for assistance if they meet the state's low income guidelines and need child care to work, look for work, or attend employment training. You are guaranteed child care if you are on temporary assistance and need child care in order to meet any work

participation requirements. You are also guaranteed assistance in paying for child care for one year after leaving temporary assistance if you left for a job and need child care to go to work. Your county department of social services determines family eligibility based on income, reasons for needing day care, and your child's age and individual needs.

Once you've selected a provider it is important that you become involved in the program to not only stay informed, but also to ensure that your child consistently receives quality care. Visit and observe as much as you can; keep in touch with parents of other children in the program; get feedback from the caregivers; and listen to your child. Remember, parents are their children's primary advocates.

Another great resource is available on-line at the [New York State Office of Children and Family Services website](#). The site contains important information for parents including a search engine that can help find regulated child care providers. The website is also an extremely valuable resource for child care providers with links to program development, health and safety topics, state regulations and emergency planning.

I would also invite parents to utilize my [printable daycare checklist](#). This valuable resource can help during the evaluation of prospective day care providers.

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