Your Guide to Choosing Child Care

Dear Parent:

Thank you for contacting Child Care Resource and Referral. Among our services, we have a current list of state licensed and residential certificate child care providers in your child care search.

Because we do not visit the child care providers on our database system, we cannot guarantee or recommend one provider over another and we accept neither responsibility nor liability for them.

One of our most important jobs is to inform you on how to choose quality child care. Our referral specialists are available to answer questions during your child care search and while your child remains in child care, but parents are in the best position to observe and select the site that best meets the needs of their child. We recommend that you select a provider that best suits the needs of your child, do a site visit and personal inspection.

We strongly recommend that the parents contact licensing toll free at 1-888-287-3704 to request information concerning a particular provider compliance with state rules and regulations. Or you can visit the Care About Child Care website to view a provider’s file online at careaboutchildcare.utah.gov. The following information will be helpful to you in your search for quality child care.

Sincerely,
Care About Childcare @ Weber State University

As Parents You Have The Right To:

✓ Check references.
✓ Visit your child unannounced during business hours.
✓ Call to see how your child is doing.
✓ Assume your child will be treated with respect and affection
✓ Expect your child’s care giver to use a positive discipline style with your child.
✓ Talk to your child’s care giver daily to receive updates on behaviors and habits.
✓ Express concerns for your child.

As A Parent You Are Responsible For:

✓ Making the final decision on your child’s care.
✓ Checking to see if the program is licensed.
✓ Listening to the care giver’s point of view.
✓ Talking to your care giver regularly about your child and how he/she is doing in the child care setting.
✓ Discussing your child’s illness with the care giver when your child is sick.
✓ Monitoring your child’s program on a continual basis.

YOUR EIGHT STEP CHILD CARE SEARCH

Looking for child care is hard work. No one else can do it for you. Make sure to give yourself plenty of time to conduct your search. Here are eight steps which you can follow to help the search go smoothly.

1. Read the following material on how to choose quality child care.

2. Decide what your child care needs are:
   - What days and hours do you need child care?
   - What location is most convenient?
   - What can you afford to spend on child care?

3. Call your local Care About Childcare Agency Weber, Morgan & Davis at 801-626-7837 Or toll free at 1-888-970-0101
   A Referral Specialist can review your child care needs and give you a list of child care providers over the phone. It is always a good idea to call friends, family, community and church contacts to receive as many names as possible in your area.

4. Do a telephone interview with each of the names you collect. Set up an appointment with only the providers who meets your needs.

5. Visit at least three providers.

6. Ask for references and call them.

7. Call the office of licensing at 1-888-287-3704 or visit cac.utah.gov. See if the child care provider has had any complaints or what their compliance history has been with licensing.

8. Select care. Then do a drop in visit (an unannounced visit) and continue to observe what happens as you arrive there daily.

If you can’t find care you are happy with the first time through, start your search again. Quality child care is the best investment you can make in your child.
WHAT IS QUALITY CHILD CARE?

Quality child care makes a big difference in the future of your child. It can give your child a head start toward a strong and healthy mind, body and spirit. Although quality child care can mean different things to different people, many experts agree that quality includes that following:

- **Affection and Attention**
  Is the provider interested in your child as an individual? Do they listen and talk at the child’s level? Do they comfort the children when they need it? The provider should be warm, energetic and caring with children.

- **Group Size**
  Small groups are best.

- **Training and Background of the Child Care Provider**
  Ask what training in child development the person has. How long have they been doing child care?

- **Low Staff Turnover**
  It is important to your child to have the same Caregiver for as long as possible-hopefully, a year or longer.

- **Parent/Provider Communication**
  This is important for a good partnership and the child’s positive experience in care.

- **Development Growth**
  Do the program’s child rearing goals match your own?

- **A Healthy Environment**
  Are emergency numbers and policies posted? Locks on cabinets? Clean and safe places for children to crawl? Healthy food? Separate areas for eating, diapering, resting and playing?

**TELEPHONE CHECK-LIST**

A good telephone interview can save you time and energy in your search for child care. Only set up face-to-face interviews with provider who you feel good about over the phone.

- How many children are you licensed for?
- How many children will be in my child’s group?
- How long have you been in business?
- Do you have any training in early childhood education?
- What are some of the classes you have taken?
- What is your daily schedule for the children?
- What fees include? Lunches? Snacks? Field trips?
- What is your policy for sick children?

- What are your days and hours of operation?
- Do you hire a substitute when you are on vacation?
- What holidays are you closed for?
- Tell me how much and what television programs the children are allowed to watch.
- Do you have a current CPR/First Aid certificate?
- Can you provide references?

If you like what you hear after talking to the provider on the telephone, set up a time during business hours to observe on-site. Let the provider know you would like to come and see where your child would be spending their day. This will help you feel at ease as you tour the child care facility.

**ON-SITE CHECKLIST**

**PROVIDERS**

- Does the provider seem to really like children?
- Does the provider communicate on each child’s level?
- Are the children greeted when they arrive?
- Are children’s needs met quickly even when things get busy?
- Will the provider tell you what your child will be doing every day?
- Are parents’ ideas welcomed? Are there ways for you to get involved?
- Does there seem to be more children than the provider can adequately care for?
- Do the provider and the children seem to enjoy being together?
- Has the provider met or exceeded required training?
- Ask for references and previous experience.
- Does the facility meet your expectations for a healthy and safe environment?

**SETTING**

- Is the atmosphere bright and pleasant?
- Is there a fenced outdoor play area with a variety of safe toys and equipment?
- Can the provider see the entire play area at all times?
- Do adult supervise outdoor play?
- Are there different areas for resting, quiet play and active play?
- Are there individual beds or comfortable mats to sleep on?
- Do children have a place for their own belongings?

**ACTIVITIES**

- Is there a daily balance of play time, story time, activity time and nap time?
- Are the activities appropriate for each age group?
- Are there enough toys and learning materials for the number of children in their care?
- Are the toys clean, safe and within reach of the children?
- If a television is used, is it limited to short periods of time? What kinds of programs are the children allowed to watch? Will a schedule be provided to the parents?

**IN GENERAL**

- Do you agree with their discipline practices?
- Do you hear the sounds of happy children?
- Is the program operating legally?
- Are the children comforted when needed?
- How is the program regulated?
- Are surprise or drop-in visits by parents encouraged?
- Was your first reaction to the program good?
- Will your child be happy here?
- Does this seem to be a healthy and safe environment?
- Does the provider have a written contract or agreement so all expectations are clear?
ASKING FOR REFERENCES

It is not always easy to call strangers and ask about their opinion. Here are a few suggestions to help you get the most out of the references you receive from a Caregiver.

1. Say to the provider, “Could you give me the names of some other parents I could call as a reference?” Make it very clear that you want to call parent who have had children in their care. Friends or relatives can vouch for the person’s reputation but can’t tell you much about the actual care.

2. Try to get names of current users of their program as well as former users. Former users of their care may be more inclined to talk to you honestly because their child is no longer enrolled there. Current users can give you a better picture of what the care is like right now.

3. Ask for at least six or seven names. References are sometimes hard to track down. It is always better to ask for more names than you would actually need. If you are uneasy about the responses you get from the first few you call, it is nice to have others to fall back on.

4. Write down the questions that you want to ask before you call. Ask specific questions that require more than yes and no answer. Asking, “What do you like best about Mrs. Smith’s Service?” will get you more information than if you ask, “Are you happy with Mrs. Smith?”

Here are some suggestions of questions to ask, but you may want to ask questions that address your individual concerns:

- How long has it been since your child was in Mrs. Smith’s Care?
- How old was your child when he/she started care?
- What three things do you like the least?
- What happens when the provider is sick?
- What happens when your child gets sick?
- What adults have contact with the children?
- How does Mrs. Smith discipline?
- How does your child feel about the child care? Is he/she generally happy to go there?
- I am worried about this specific problem my child has (name the problem). Do you think that Mrs. Smith can handle it?
- Do you have any reservations about recommending this child care program?
- Would you select this care for another child of yours?

Even though the provider gives you the references, don’t assume that all you hear is praise. Even people who love their child care provider may tell you something that will help you decide whether the program will work for you and your child. Listen to what is said and what is left unsaid. Silence and hesitation can speak volumes. You are one who is responsible for choosing the quality program your child will attend. Calling references can be one of the many tools you use to determine the quality of the program you are checking. It is one piece of the quality child care puzzle.

SPECIAL AGE CONSIDERATIONS

INFANTS AND TODDLERS
☐ Are the toys and infant equipment available so that when the baby is awake they can be out of the crib?
☐ Is there clean, adequate floor space for babies to crawl on?
☐ Are the toys placed on low shelves within the reach of young children, safe and age appropriate?
☐ How often will your child be checked for wet diapers?
☐ Can the diaper changing surface be easily cleaned?
☐ Does the provider use gloves and was her hands before and after each diaper change?
☐ Are each child’s food and bottles labeled and stored appropriately?
☐ Are young infants held for bottle feeding?
☐ Do providers hold, “coo,” and nurture infants?
☐ Where will your child sleep?
☐ What plans are made for clean sheets and blankets?
☐ Are you provided with daily record of you baby’s activities?

TWO YEAR OLDS
☐ Is there a schedule for the day?
☐ Do the providers have costumes/clothes and other props for pretend play?
☐ Are there times during the day for singing and dance/movement?
☐ Are there small climbing toys provided?
☐ Is there a large variety of toys provided?
☐ Are low swings, small slides and low climbing toys available?
☐ What is the provider’s policy on toilet training?

☐ Does the provider use positive discipline techniques which encourage high self esteem in the children?
☐ Are the rules governing the child’s behavior clear and understandable?
☐ Are the children encouraged to do things by themselves such as feeding, dressing, choosing toys, and activities?

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN: THREES AND FOUR YEAR OLDS
☐ Are there props. Costumes, musical instruments, blocks of all sizes, art supplies and toys for creative/imaginative play?
☐ Are the children allowed to choose their own activities for at least part of the day?
☐ Does the provider take the children on field trips?
☐ Are there limits sets set for the children that will help them work out problems and make choices on their own?
☐ Does the provider help children feel good about themselves by being attentive and accepting?
☐ Are the children read to often?
☐ Are the children allowed to finish a project before moving on to something else?

SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN
☐ Are there other children close to your child’s age?
☐ Does the provider have craft projects, sports equipment, drama activities and table games for the children’s individual interest?
☐ Can the children relax, talk with friends, do homework or read a book during unstructured time?
☐ Does the provider give supervision, but also understand the older child’s need for independence?
YOUR CHILD CARE PROVIDER – PARTNERS FROM THE START

- Establish a warm, trustworthy relationship with your child’s provider
- Look at the provider as a professional.
- Agree on Goals
  Discuss important issues with your provider
- Be Responsible
  Be on time to pick up and drop off your child
  Pay on time in advance of service
- Inform Your Provider
  Give your provider advance notice about vacations or changes in your child’s day care routines.
- Voice Your Concerns
  If you have concern or a problem discuss it with your provider. Give specific examples and be sure to keep children and other parents out of your dispute.
- Share Serious Problems
  Problems at home, like separation or divorce, can have a strong impact on a child. It may be helpful to share changes like these. Your provider can then understand new behavior and support you child through tough times.
- Show Your Appreciation
  Let your provider know you appreciate the work they do. Give specific examples of what the caregiver has done for your child.

TOOLS FOR BECOMING A WISE CHILD CARE CONSUMER

When you are choosing the most appropriate child care setting for your child, it is very important you understand the types of care available in Utah. Take the time to visit several providers before making this important decision. The quality of care provided will vary from provider to provider regardless of regulation. This chart is design to help you become a more informed child care consumer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Legally Licensed Exempt</th>
<th>Residential Certificate</th>
<th>Licensed Family</th>
<th>Licensed Family Group</th>
<th>Center Child Care</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Care for up to 4 children with 1 Caregiver.</td>
<td>Care for up to 8 children including their own under the age of 4 with 1 Caregiver. Only 2 of them can be under age of 2.</td>
<td>Care for up to 8 children including their own under the age of 4 with 1 caregiver. Only 2 of them can be under the age of 2 or 1:6 ratio with 3 infants</td>
<td>Care for up to 16 children including their own under the age of 4 with 2 caregivers. Only 4 of those can be under 2.</td>
<td>Care for children outside a residence. Rations vary from age to age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No criminal background check</td>
<td>Yearly criminal background check</td>
<td>Yearly criminal background check on individuals living in home over 12 years of age.</td>
<td>Yearly criminal background check on individuals living in home over 12 years of age.</td>
<td>Yearly criminal background check on each Caregiver.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No annual training</td>
<td>10 hours of annual training in child development, safety and health</td>
<td>20 hours of annual training in child development, safety and health</td>
<td>20 hours of annual training in child development, safety and health.</td>
<td>20 hours of annual training for each caregiver.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No home visits by the licensing to check for minimum health and safety standards.</td>
<td>Annual home visits by licensing with a 90 day notice.</td>
<td>Annual home visit by licensing, no notice required.</td>
<td>Annual home visit by licensing, no notice required.</td>
<td>Annual, visits by licensing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Initial fire inspection</td>
<td>Initial fire inspection</td>
<td>Initial fire inspection.</td>
<td>Planned and posted activities for children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enforcement of health and safety violations.</td>
<td>Meet all zoning and planning regulations for their area.</td>
<td>Meet all zoning and planning regulations for their area.</td>
<td>Enforcement of health and safety violations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RC is considered a lower standard than a license because of difference in Caregiver Training and Outdoor Equipment Standards.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Enforcement of health and safety violations.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Directors are required to have a CDA or AA/AS or BA/BS in early childhood development.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Child care centers ratios vary for each age group. Please contact the Child Care Bureau of Licensing (Weber, Morgan & Davis Counties call 1-888-287-3704) for current regulations for child care centers.

For more information please visit our website at [http://weber.edu/cac](http://weber.edu/cac)

It is your right and responsibility to make the best choice possible for your child and family. The provider you choose will become your partner in the care and education of your child.

Care About Childcare @ Weber State ● 801-626-7837 ● toll free at 1-888-970-0101