

# Child Care Checklist

By Laura Cooper Peterson

- Initial Impressions
  - Is your initial reaction upon entering the site a positive one?
  - Is the atmosphere relaxed and happy?
  - Is this a place my child would enjoy?
  - Would my child be safe here?
  - Do you and your child feel welcome?
  - Can you hear laughter and the sounds of children playing?
  - Do staff members seem interested in your child and did they make an effort to talk to him or her?
  - Do the rooms seem well organised, clean and tidy?
  - Is the reception area clean, tidy and organised?
  - Is there anything that appears to be out of place?
  - Were you offered introductions of all staff and a tour of the centre?
  - Would I/we feel comfortable using this program?
  - Would my child learn new things every day at this program?
- Facility
  - Is the provider certified by the Department of Public Welfare and is the certification notice posted?
  - Is the building light and pleasant to be in with good ventilation and/or air conditioning?
  - Does the building seem modern and well maintained?
  - Is there plenty of space for the children to play?
  - Are there plenty of corners where children can go for quiet play?
  - Are the sleeping areas separate to the play areas?
  - Are separate spaces available for the different age groups?
  - Is the quantity of toys and materials sufficient for the number of children in the classroom?
  - Are there appropriate toys and materials for children of all age groups?
  - Is the classroom arranged in a way that toys and materials are accessible to children?
  - Are the furnishings in the classrooms child sized?

- Are there obvious hazards such as dangerous substances, electrical cords, uncovered electrical outlets, cleaning materials, or medications accessible to the children?
- Are fire extinguishers on site?
- Are fire escape plans/emergency evacuation plans posted?
- Are the toilets and sinks clean and easy for the children to use?
- Are the sinks and bathroom stocked with appropriate supplies?
- Does the provider encourage you to drop in and visit at any time?
- The Outside
  - Do the children have an opportunity to play outside each day?
  - Does the outside play equipment accommodate children of all different ages?
  - Is the outside area free of litter and obvious hazards such as broken glass?
  - Is the outdoor play equipment sturdy and in good repair?
  - Are children being supervised by the child care provider?
  - Is there an outside area with plenty of shade?
  - Do children two years and younger play separately from the older children?
  - Are the child care providers interacting with the children?
  - Does the center encourage use of the outside area for learning activities as well as free play?
- Management, Staff and Supervision
  - Who manages the child care centre? Can you meet him/her?
  - Does the manager also supervise the staff?
  - What are the child to carer ratios at the centre?
  - What background checks are completed on staff?
  - What qualifications do staff members hold?
  - What is the staff turnover rate?
  - What is the centre's procedure for dealing with complaints against staff?
  - Does the centre hold adequate insurance?
  - Are children supervised at all times?
  - How do staff members deal with behavioural issues?
  - Are children supervised when they go to the toilet?

- Does staff communicate daily with parents about their child's progress?
- Does staffing allow for each child to receive individual attention?
- Does staff sit and read to the children?
- Does staff seem patient and receptive to children's needs?
- Is staff respectful of children?
- Is staff respectful of parents?
- Does staff encourage children's sharing, manners, and other good behaviors?
- Does staff appear lively, smiling, and interacting in a positive manner with the children?
- Does staff involve children in daily learning activities?
- Planned Activities and Programs
  - Do the children have a consistent routine that they can understand and follow?
  - Does the centre offer a range of programs for the children to participate in?
  - How are these programs developed? Are they designed to be educational? Do they take into account the cultural and religious diversity in the group?
  - Do the children seem occupied and engaged?
  - Are the children involved in activities that promote learning?
  - Is there a policy on discipline?
  - What percentage of your child's day will be spent on planned programs and what percentage will be spent on free play?