

As you think about
child care for your
school-age child...



make a visit...
ask questions...
then decide.



New York State Office of Children and Family Services
Capital View Office Park
52 Washington Street
Rensselaer, New York 12144

Choosing good child care is an important decision. Safe and positive child care sets the stage for healthy growth and development. It takes time, patience and an understanding of what to look for when selecting child care.

Learn about different child care programs and visit them before making a decision. Call and make an appointment. Look around the child care setting carefully. Watch how the children and adults interact with one another. Ask questions. Listen. Talk to parents who use the caregiver.

Once you have selected a child care setting and your child is in care, keep asking questions. Always check to make sure the program still meets the needs of your family. It's a lot of work, but your child is worth it.

Selecting child care is an important step in the life of your child. You know the needs of your child and family. This important decision will make a big difference in your child's development, health and happiness.

Think About Child Care Resources

Call the New York Parents' Connection at **1-800-345-KIDS** or visit **www.ocfs.state.ny.us** for other *Think About Child Care* materials.

- *As You Think About Child Care*
- *As You Think About Child Care for Your Infant or Toddler*
- *As You Think About Child Care for Your 3- to 5-Year-Old*



State of New York



Office of Children and Family Services
Capital View Office Park
52 Washington Street
Rensselaer, New York 12144

www.ocfs.state.ny.us

For a copy of the New York State child care regulations and/or more information on selecting child care contact your local child care resource agency, visit the NYS Office of Children and Family Services website at **www.ocfs.state.ny.us** or call the New York Parents' Connection at **1-800-345-KIDS**.

Call the Child Care Complaint Line at **1-800-732-5207** with concerns about a caregiver.

To report child abuse and neglect call **1-800-342-3720**.

Other brochures available through the New York State Office of Children and Family Services:

Kieran's Law (Pub. 4628) a brochure on the responsibilities and services available to you as an employer of an in-home caregiver.

This publication is available in Spanish.
Pub #1115D (Rev. 11/07)
Please call 1-800-345-KIDS.

Pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services will make this material available in large print or on audiotape upon request.

Before Making the Decision

Six Tips When Looking for Child Care

Paying for Child Care

You may be eligible for help to pay for child care. Contact your county department of social services to get more information about child care subsidies. To find your local department of social services, call the NYS Parents' Connection at **1-800-345-KIDS** or go to **www.ocfs.state.ny.us**

New York State Child and Dependent Care Tax Credit

You may qualify to claim the New York State child and dependent care tax credit. For more information contact the New York State Department of Taxation and Finance General Tax Information at **1-800-225-5829** or go to the website at **www.tax.state.ny.us**.

Notes: _____

1. Visit the child care program while it is open and children are there.
2. Take the time to talk to the caregiver and ask questions. Look around the program to see how things are handled.
3. Make sure the child care program:
 - ☐ Has enough caregivers for the number of children. Check New York State regulations for child/caregiver ratios.
 - ☐ Takes steps to prevent accidents and has a plan to handle fire or medical emergencies.
 - ☐ Knows how to help children stay healthy and teaches them healthy eating habits.
 - ☐ Plans a balance of indoor and outdoor play that is active and quiet.
4. A good relationship between the children and caregiver is important. The caregiver should:
 - ☐ Enjoy talking to and playing with the children.
 - ☐ Have experience, education and/or training in caring for children.
5. Consider the cost, location and hours the child care is open.
6. Talk to parents who use the caregiver and keep looking until you are satisfied with your choice.

Think About the Type of Child Care

Licensed or registered child care settings must meet specific health, safety and program requirements. Some caregivers may not be required to meet state regulations to legally provide care. These options should meet your own standards for the health, safety and development of your child.

Regulated Child Care Situations for All Ages

- ☐ **Day Care Center** - more than six children, not in someone's home, for more than three hours a day.
- ☐ **Small Day Care Center** - three to six children, not in someone's home, for more than three hours a day.
- ☐ **Family Day Care Home** - three to six children, in a home, for more than three hours a day. One or two more children may come after school, and there are no more than two infants being cared for in the program.
- ☐ **Group Family Day Care Home** - seven to 12 children in a home, with the help of an assistant, for more than three hours a day.
- ☐ **Head Start** - licensed as a day care center and provides additional services to children and families.
- ☐ **Pre-kindergarten Programs** - offered by many public schools for 4- to 5-year-old children during the school year.
- ☐ **School-age Child Care** - seven or more children (kindergarteners through 12-year-olds) during non-school hours.

Before Making the Decision

Provider 2

Child Care Program: _____

Child Care Address: _____

Child Care Phone #: _____

Type of Child Care: _____

Number of Children: _____ Number of Caregivers: _____

Provider 3

Child Care Program: _____

Child Care Address: _____

Child Care Phone #: _____

Type of Child Care: _____

Number of Children: _____ Number of Caregivers: _____

Before Making the Decision

Caregiver Information/Ratios

There should be enough caregivers for the number of children in a program. Child/caregiver ratios for regulated care are found in the state regulations. For care that is legal but not regulated the guidelines are listed in this brochure.

Provider 1

Child Care Program: _____

Child Care Address: _____

Child Care Phone #: _____

Type of Child Care: _____

Number of Children: _____ Number of Caregivers: _____

Think About the Type of Child Care

Legal but Not Regulated Child Care Situations

- ☐ **Informal Care** - care provided by a child's relative, a family friend or neighbor who watches one or two children not related to the caregiver, but never more than a total of eight children.
- ☐ **In-home Care** - when a caregiver comes to your home to watch your children.
- ☐ **Non-public Nursery School and Pre-kindergarten Programs** - A program that is not in someone's home that cares for children three hours a day or less.

Completing the Checklist

Visit each program. Ask the caregiver questions and look around to see how things are handled. Ask about the things that are important to you and not on the checklist. Based on what you find, write Y/yes or N/no in the space provided. Once you've completed your visits, compare the different programs. Talk to other parents who use the caregiver. Then decide on the best program for your child and family.

Think About Family Needs

Before Making the Decision

Think About Family Needs

The cost of care, program hours and transportation are important things to consider when selecting child care. For school-age child care, parents must also consider transportation to and from the caregiver and school and whether the care is available during school holidays and snow days.

Family Needs	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
Transportation is available between school and the caregiver or the program is on-site at school.			
The program is open the hours your child needs care.			
The child care program is open when school is closed for holidays, school vacations, snow and half days.			
Ask the caregiver about payment policies including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Child care subsidy payments ■ Payment options ■ Due dates and late fees ■ Vacation and holiday payment 			
Parents may visit the child care program any time it is open.			

Before Making the Decision

Compare and consider the different caregivers you visited during your search. Ask other parents about the caregiver. Call the regional office of the New York State Office of Children and Family Services for the licensing history (including regulatory violations) of any regulated program. To contact your local regional office, call **1-800-732-5207** or visit the website at **www.ocfs.state.ny.us**. Then decide where you feel comfortable leaving your child and if it is the best fit for your family.

Before Making the Decision	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
<p>The regional office of OCFS will let you know if the caregiver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Is licensed or registered. ■ Was licensed or registered in the past. ■ Has a registration/licensing or violation history. 			
Talk to other families who use the caregiver.			

Notes: _____

Think About Positive Discipline

Think About Positive Discipline

Caregivers need to set limits for children. Those limits depend on a child's age and abilities. Children should be reminded of the limits without hitting or scaring them, hurting their feelings or taking away something important like food or rest. Corporal punishment is never allowed.

Positive Discipline	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
The caregiver has a written discipline policy that is given to each parent.			
Parents and the caregiver talk about and agree on appropriate discipline.			
The caregiver understands that school-age children need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Know the rules of the program and what happens if they do not follow them. ■ Talk about their feelings and use their words. ■ Be encouraged to cooperate. ■ Learn from mistakes and encourage them to try again. 			
To prevent hurt feelings, the caregiver does not allow teasing, bullying and name-calling.			

Think About Family Needs

Think About Family Needs

Family Needs	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
Parents get a copy of the policies and rules of the child care program.			
Parents are told about the activities for children at least once a week.			

Notes: _____

Think About the Caregiver

Think About the Caregiver

A good relationship between the child, family and caregiver is important to everyone. The caregiver should have experience, education and/or training in working with school-age children. The caregiver should communicate well with children and parents.

Think About the Caregiver	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
The caregiver has experience working with school-age children and enjoys working with them.			
The caregiver takes training and/or education courses on the health, safety and development of children.			
The caregiver respects and understands the values and culture of the child's family.			
All regulated caregivers, substitutes and anyone over 18 years old living in a regulated child care home have been fingerprinted and completed all required criminal and child abuse background checks.			

Notes: _____

Think About Their Day

Active and Quiet Time	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
Children spend supervised time outdoors every day unless the weather is bad.			
The indoor and outdoor play spaces and equipment are clean, safe and free of sharp edges.			
There are soft pieces of furniture and quiet space for children who need to rest after a full day of school.			
There is a quiet supervised area for children to do homework.			

Notes: _____

Think About Their Day

Learning, Thinking and Imagination	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
Before school, quiet activities are planned to help the children get ready for the school day.			
There are a variety of toys and materials that are clean, safe and in good repair for children to use on their own: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arts and crafts materials Board games, puzzles Music tapes or CDs 			
Activities are planned for children to work on together like planting a garden or making snacks.			

Active and Quiet Time	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
There are safe, active ways for children to release energy and move muscles after being in school all day.			
Younger children do not compete with the older children for play space.			

Notes: _____

Think About the Caregiver

Think About the Caregiver	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
Ask the informal caregiver if he/she has a criminal background and if anyone else over 18 years old will be in the home during child care hours.			

Notes: _____

Think About Safety

Think About Safety

It is important to know what steps the caregiver takes to prevent accidents and what plans are in place in case of emergency.

Preventing Accidents	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
<p>The caregiver supervises the children and gives them:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Time to have some privacy and independence while still being supervised. ■ A chance to play alone with 1-2 children. 			
The program has been checked for dangerous substances like lead, radon and asbestos.			
The caregiver regularly checks outdoor and indoor equipment for wear and tear.			
There is fencing or another sturdy barrier to keep children away from pools, ponds and other bodies of water.			

Notes: _____

Think About Their Day

Think About Their Day

After a full day of school, each child will have different needs. The caregiver should offer a variety of free-choice activities for the children. There should be a balance of active, quiet, indoor and outdoor play.

Talking and Language	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
Children are encouraged to read, write, talk and ask questions. There is a variety of books and magazines for all ages and reading levels.			

Watching Television	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
Television and videos are only used for short periods of time and for educational purposes.			
There are other activities for children who do not want to watch television or videos.			
The use of hand-held electronic games is limited.			

Notes: _____

Think About Keeping Children Healthy

When Children Are Sick or Injured	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
The health care plan includes whether the caregiver will give medicine to children.			
The caregiver has the skills and training to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give over-the-counter or prescription medicine to children. Know a minor injury from one that needs medical attention. Give first aid and CPR. 			

Eating Healthy	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
Meals and snacks include a variety of fresh fruits, vegetables, meats, bread and milk products.			
Snack time is flexible and long enough that children do not need to rush. Children may have snacks when they arrive at the program, and they are told before snacks are put away.			
Snack or meal time is a time for children to talk about their day with friends and the caregiver.			

Think About Safety

Preventing Accidents	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
There is a system to keep track of children attending off-site activities such as tutoring, dance or music lessons, or sports activities.			

Handling Emergencies	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
The caregiver has a plan to handle fire or medical emergencies.			
There is a stocked first-aid kit.			
The caregiver knows how to handle minor injuries and what to do when an injury requires a trip to the doctor or emergency room.			
The caregiver has a working phone. Fire, police, ambulance and poison control telephone numbers are posted.			

Notes: _____

Think About Safety

Fire Emergencies	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
There are smoke detectors on each floor and multipurpose fire extinguishers in the caregiver's home. The school-age program site has a fire detection system.			
The plan to escape a fire emergency is practiced at least once a month with the children.			
There are at least two separate building exits in case of fire.			

Notes: _____

Think About Keeping Children Healthy

Think About Keeping Children Healthy

To keep children healthy, the caregiver should encourage good health habits and take steps to prevent the spread of germs. Make sure you know the program has an approved health care plan and ask to see a copy. Child care programs must follow specific rules to give over-the-counter or prescription medicine to children.

Keeping Children Healthy	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
All children must have up-to-date immunizations.			
The caregiver prevents the spread of germs by washing hands many times during the day. Children also wash their hands often during the day.			
The child care setting is clean. Toys, furniture and floors are washed frequently with a bleach solution to prevent the spread of germs.			

When Children Are Sick or Injured	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
The caregiver's health care plan meets the health care needs of my child.			
The caregiver has a plan to handle medical emergencies.			