



## Guidelines for Choosing Quality Child Care

All parents with children in child care want their children to receive the highest quality of care. One definition of quality child care reads:

“These programs or providers offer engaging, appropriate activities in settings that facilitate healthy growth and development, and prepare children for or promote their success in school.”

How do you define quality child care? Most parents would agree with the above definition, but of course as parents the care of your children is much more personal than that. Parents want their children in a safe environment, with a “warm” caregiver, in a program that provides lots of activities and learning opportunities for their children. All of these qualities are part of an engaging and appropriate setting that many parents consider when choosing child care.

### What Determines High Quality Care?

When considering a child care setting, parents naturally are looking for a warm and nurturing caregiver. But, equally important are two other types of measures that also indicate a quality environment.

The first is the **process** – what goes on in the program, their procedures, activities and so on and, the second is the **structure** – the physical environment, the number of providers and teachers and children, the safety features. Both are equally important.

When you are considering a child care program, whether it is center-based or a family child care home, here are some questions that you could ask the programs (and yourself) that would help determine if the program provides high quality care.

- What kind of program is provided?
  - Do they follow a curriculum?
  - How many children are in care? What is the ratio of staff to children? If it is a center, how are the children grouped?
  - What kind of training and certification does the child care staff have?

