

The Mom's Guide To Childcare PROVIDERS



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Introduction

For some parents, staying at home with their children sounds like the ultimate luxury. For others, that may sound like a one-way ticket to insanity.

In today's society, even those who want to stay at home may not be able to. Two parent families often need two incomes to stay afloat, and single parents have no other choice but to work.

That being said, more and more people are turning to daycare. This can be a confusing journey for many reasons. In this guide, you'll learn how to find quality daycare, learn how to deal with feelings of anxiety and guilt, find solutions for dealing with daycare bullies, and get advice on how to approach your childcare provider over something you are not happy about.

We're on your side, Mom! Now, let's get started!

How To Find A Quality Daycare

It's the quest of working parents everywhere: trying to find the perfect daycare. Finding a quality daycare center, that actually has an opening, can be challenging, to say the least. It can be especially daunting if you are trying to find one for the first time and don't really know where to start.

You may be surprised to learn that there are many resources available to help in your search. You'll still need to do a lot of work, but you don't have to go it alone.

For starters, ask other parents that you know and trust for their opinions. The particular daycare that they rave about may not have openings, but you can still put your name on the waiting list. They

may also be able to help you steer clear of less than desirable daycare centers.

Don't just take their word for it, though. Your state will also have a record of quality daycare centers in your area. They will only recommend providers who are licensed through the state.

This extra qualification ensures that the center fulfilled your state's requirements. Each state will have its own regulations, but this generally means that the staff took specialized classes, including CPR.

You can also do searches online. Many daycares have their own websites that include pictures of the facilities. This is much more helpful than your standard listing in the newspaper or phone book.

Now that you have a few places in mind, it's time to start the screening process. Start by asking yourself what the ideal childcare center would be like. Would the staff operate on a friendly, creative level or more like a school, with set routines and curriculum?

Would your ideal daycare center offer hot meals or would you rather pack your own child's lunch and snacks? Would you

Maybe you want your child to be taken to a park or field trips. Maybe you want a smaller daycare center or more individualized care and attention for your child. In this you would want to know how many providers there are for the children.

Another good piece of knowledge would be to know how long the providers have worked for the daycare center or how long the other children have been there.

Now at this point you will have determined whether you want a daycare center or in home care for your child. Should you choose a center be sure to visit the center. You will be able to see the interaction of children and adults alike, the cleanliness of the center. You will have more of first hand knowledge of how the center is setup for programs geared toward specific ages.

Ask about your ability to participate in field trips or other events. Determine the facilities policies regarding child pickup, as well as safety.

In short, determine the type of child care you desire, don't be afraid to ask questions, and feel free to visit in order to confirm any details that you are given. Remember, this is your child and you have the right to ensure their safety.

Creative Childcare Solutions

There are many types of child care services that are not only creative childcare solutions, but that can keep your child happy while you are away. For whatever reason you need childcare, whether it is for work, school or just to get away, try one of these creative solutions.

Check into your local high schools and colleges to see if they offer child care at a reduced cost. Some schools teach child care or preschool classes, and you can enroll your children there, usually for less than you would at a traditional day care.

However, these situations are being supervised by reliable and dependable teachers, so you can rest assured your children are in a safe environment. Many schools actually have preschools that they run right out of the school, that your child can go to all week long.

Check into churches to find the solution to your childcare issues. Many churches run daycares at a lesser cost, and accept those who are not members. If they do not have any type of child care, they may be able to refer you to an organization that does. Your local YMCA or YWCA may also run a daycare center out of their facilities, and these generally cost less, as well.

If you only need childcare while you run some errands, talk to family and friends who have kids to see if you can trade child care days. You may benefit each other by each watching one another's children a certain day or number of days throughout the week, so that child care needs are met for all.

Employ the help of a babysitter to fill in when you need childcare on the spur of the moment. Better yet, try to have 2 or 3 babysitters that you trust and can rely on when you need child care the most.

If you have younger family members in your extended family, such as nieces or cousins, you may be able to pay them to baby sit, and that way, you will almost always have available child care when you need it.

If you are in need of child care because you are looking for a job, you may want to find a job that can actually help you with these services. Many hospitals operate their own child care services right in the building, and can be available to you if you work there. If you work in a school district, you will probably be able to utilize their child care services, as well.

Most parents will agree that finding child-care providers may be one of the hardest parts of parenting. Thankfully, it can be done. By getting creative, you'll have more options to choose from and you'll be able to select the one that best fits your family's needs.

Signs Of Good Child Care

If you are feeling a bit stressed out about leaving your child with a childcare provider, you are not alone. It's normal to feel anxious when your child is in someone else's care; even if it is someone you know and trust.

Being able to spot the signs of good child care will help calm your nerves. The following are a few things to look for:

Recommendations From Others

When interviewing a new childcare provider or screening childcare facilities, it's important to check references and certifications. Just because someone says they have prior experience, licensing, and happy former clients doesn't mean they do.

They Abide By Rules And Policies

Does your childcare provider follow your state's rules and policies? For example, some states require a specific ratio of adults per children. Call your state's licensing department to learn these rules and any other policies regarding childcare. Visit your daycare facility at various times and make sure they are abiding by all rules and regulations.

They Interact Well With Your Child

Does your childcare provider seem open, caring and patient? Do they seem to genuinely enjoy being with children? Are they patient with you when you ask them questions? Most importantly, do they interact well with your child?

Cleanliness Is A Priority

If the childcare provider comes to your home, does your home look nice and well maintained when you get home or does it look like a tornado went through? If at a facility, check to make sure it is clean and that the staff promotes cleanliness.

Safety First

Does your provider look out for the safety of your child? If your child will be going to a facility, look for safety precautions and childproofing. Does the provider know infant or child CPR and first aid? Do they know how to handle an emergency?

They Plan Varied Activities

Turning on the television and watching cartoons may keep your child entertained, but that doesn't mean they are receiving quality

care. Does your childcare provider plan various activities, such as games that allow your children to learn something, fun art projects, and time outside?

Your Child Likes The Provider

If your child seems to truly enjoy spending time with the provider, you know they are in good hands.

These are just some of the signs of quality childcare. You may want to write a list of what you consider as good childcare. Analyze your childcare provider and see if they fit that description. And never be afraid to trust your instinct. You are the parent, and you know what is best for your child.

Don't Feel Guilty

The thought of putting your child in daycare may stir up many different emotions. For some, one of the biggest feelings they experience is a sense of guilt. In these economic times, many parents have to work in order to survive. If that sounds like your situation, do not feel guilty! Daycare has many benefits!

Children who attend daycare learn socialization skills at an early age. Your child will learn how to share, solve problems, as well as empathy and sympathy at an early age.

These are valuable skills for healthy growth and learning them before school starts will put them ahead of the game. In fact, that first day of kindergarten will not be nearly as traumatic for a child who's been in daycare.

Did you realize that some stay-at-home parents put their children in daycare for 2 or 3 days a week, just so that their child can learn these same skills? Stay-at-home parents are often impressed when they see how well a young child that attends daycare speaks and handles themselves in social situations. They want the same for their children!

Being around other child in a childcare setting also teaches diversity. Diversity comes in many forms from the way a person looks, walks, talks to their disabilities or nationality.

Exposing your children to all of these factors when they are young can help them to see that the differences in people are normal and acceptable. This learning will lessen the future impact of discrimination against others.

A good day care center will have planned activities throughout the day. As a stay-at-home parent, who is also trying to cook, clean, run errands, and so forth, you would not have the time to play games, read stories, or sing the alphabet all day long.

You may be able to do this for a few hours everyday, but that would be about it. Children in daycare are exposed to a whole day of learning and playing.

When you start to feel guilty, try to remember that this is a sign of your deep love and sense of responsibility for your child. Those are good things! But also remember that you are doing nothing wrong.

As a parent who obviously loves their child very much, you have put every effort into finding your child good, quality childcare. If you've done your homework, you can rest assured that your child will be well looked after, and that they will learn many new things.

Put Your Child At Ease

It's no secret that children enjoy routines. When there is something new in their life, whether it be a new daycare or in home provider, a child may become frightened, anxious, or nervous.

There are ways to put your child at ease about approaching this new setting and if your child is at ease, you will be as well. Having your child at ease with their new child-care provider will be a win-win situation for all involved.

Depending on the age of your child, it may be possible to get them involved in the choice of a provider. When your child feels they are a part of the process and that they have some say in the situation, they will feel better all around.

Before you begin your search for a childcare provider, ask your child what questions or concerns they have that they would like expressed to the provider. You may even find that they want to ask their own questions. This will get them involved and make them feel important.

When visiting a potential facility that your child will be staying at, it is important to have your child with you as you will be able to see first hand, the reactions from your child. How they feel and interact with the other children and staff will play a big role in your decision.

If you have chosen an in-home provider, you may want to schedule a few “imitation” sessions. Have the child care provider come to your home several times while you are there. The first visit could be an hour long play-date, where you, your child, and the provider are all there together, interacting, and getting to know each other.

During the second visit, start out as you did on the first visit, but make a quiet exit after a half hour. It’s okay to stay near-by, just in case your child gets scared.

As for the third visit, greet the childcare provider at the door and then let your child know they are in charge and that you have some work to do in another room or the garage. Try to keep your distance and let your child get used to the new child-care provider.

After a half hour or so, let your child know that you need to run a quick errand and that you’ll be right back. They may put up a little bit of a fuss, but go ahead and leave, even if all you do is drive around the neighborhood for fifteen minutes.

Your child will see that you’ve come back and that the world did not end. All of their fears will be put aside and they will be at ease with their new child-care provider.

If choosing a daycare facility, it may be hard to schedule these initiation sessions as it could interfere with the other children and the facility’s routine. That being said, you may want to pop in unexpectedly in the beginning, and see how your child reacts. Were they having fun? Or were they under some sort of stress?

If going to a daycare facility, one of your child's biggest fears may be the other children and the fear that won't be able to make friends. Fortunately, it doesn't usually take very long for a child to find a playmate. In most cases, after only a few hours, a child will be totally comfortable in being in daycare.

Putting your child can be very easy. Instead of rushing things, take some extra time to get them involved and get them used to their new routine.

New Technologies Put Minds at Ease

When a person thinks about the ways technology has made their life easier, their first thoughts may be about using a computer to find information or how convenient having a cell phone is.

To some parents, technology is allowing them to keep an eye on their children whenever they want. And for a parent who is anxious about leaving their child in a daycare facility, that peace of mind is priceless.

Daycares are listening to the demand for this service and are responding quickly. The daycares who have already picked up on this trend have seen their business increase, so it is a win-win situation for everyone. Surprisingly enough, it's not that much more expensive. Some experts say the average increase for this service is less than \$20 per month.

With web cam technology, parents can visit a special web address, and with the use of a secret password and code, are able to view their child at the daycare center, any time they wish.

The technology allows them to watch how the daycare teachers handle various situations, how the staff interacts with their child, and how their child interacts with the other children.

For the safety of the child and other children attending the daycare center, only authorized family members can view the daycare through the new webcam technology, and all participants must agree on its use.

The benefits of this system are endless! Staff and teachers will always perform their jobs better, because they are aware of the fact that they are being watched. Many daycares using these systems also report less phone calls and interruptions are because parents can always see what is going on with their children.

If you are anxious about leaving your little one in a daycare center, try to find one in you area that uses this technology. Of course, if you have an in-home provider, a visit to your local electronics store will supply you with all the tools you need to implement your own webcam security system.

You will definitely rest easier knowing you can see your child all day, any time you wish, with just the click of a computer mouse!

Daycare Bullies

As a parent, one of your highest priorities is protecting your children. If most parents had their way, they would be by their children's sides, day in and day out, to keep them from both physical and emotional harm.

Of course, that scenario isn't very practical. Unless you are independently wealthy, you probably have to work for a living, and that means your children may need to go to daycare. With that, there is a chance that they will face daycare bullies. While we cannot fight these battles for our kids, we can give them what they need to handle the situation properly.

If your child has been bullied or has told you of another child in the daycare who has been bullied, here are a few things that you can do to help improve the situation.

Speak first with the teacher or director of the daycare. They are the adults responsible at the daycare, and they should be made aware of anything that is going on during their watch. Be sure that they are taking you seriously and follow up with them regularly about the situation.

Talk to your child about what to do when they are faced with a situation where they are the victim of a bully. Do not teach them to fight back physically, but to go to a caregiver and let them know what is happening. Explain to them that this is not being a tattletale, but is simply a case of protecting themselves from harm.

Make sure that the parents of the bully are informed of what is happening between your children. In many daycares, this is handled by the staff or director, but if it is not, you may want to take on this task yourself. A little intervention at home can sometimes go a long way.

Keep reinforcing to your own child the importance of treating others with the kindness and respect that everyone deserves. While you cannot control how other people raise their children, you certainly can ensure that your own children know right from wrong.

If all else fails and the situation at the daycare is not handled properly and in a timely fashion, move on. Though leaving a daycare might be a hassle, it is the best option when the safety of your child is in jeopardy.

While everyone hopes that their child will not have to deal with a daycare bully, it happens to many children every day. However, with proper handling of the situation, the problem can be dealt with quickly and both children will have learned a powerful lesson in the process.

You may not be with your child to protect them at daycare, but through proactive parenting you can help them to deal with any problems that might occur.

What You Should Do If You Are Not Happy With Your Childcare Provider

Being unhappy with a childcare provider causes panic, frustration, and even anger. As a working parent, you'd like to know your children are safe and happy everyday, and running into conflict with a childcare provider can be tough. There are ways to work through this problem to ensure that all sides are accommodated.

Address the problem as soon as it arises but not before you have had time to assess it. Going to someone in anger rarely works. Give yourself some time to think about the problem.

Determine why the situation upsets you. If another child bit yours, decide whether you're angry because of the biting, which may not be the fault of the provider, or because you feel the provider wasn't watching your child. Knowing what bothers you will make it easier to explain your frustration.

Decide what kind of outcome you'd like before you talk to your childcare provider. Going into a discussion with an idea of the resolution you would like helps the situation.

Once you have completed those steps, it's time to sort things out with your childcare provider. Contact the provider at a time when she is not likely to be busy with other children.

Begin the conversation by explaining your version of what the problem is. For example, "my son explained that another child is taking toys from him repeatedly, and I wanted to address it with you to make sure I understand what's going on."

This statement works much better than "are you letting Nate take toys from the other kids?" Present your side and then listen - carefully - as the provider explains her side of the situation.

Tell the provider without judgment what the problem is for you. Some concerns are about safety. A biting or hitting child can cause injuries, for example, but other issues, such as feeding children junk food, are more about personal philosophy.

Explain why you are upset without getting too technical. Parents with major food prohibitions need not go into detail about what artificial colors and sweeteners do to the body; they need only explain that they are particular about food and prefer their toddler eat only what is sent from home.

Avoid getting into battle with the provider over whether your philosophy is right. You are the parent, and the provider does not have to agree in principle. She has only to agree to do as you have asked.

Present the possible solutions you prepared and work with your provider to come up with one that works for both of you. Creativity is necessary here as you want to make both sides happy.

Knowing your boundaries and what will make you happy about the situation will help you know judge whether the final solution will work for your family.

How To Fire Your Daycare

Finding a quality daycare where our children are happy and well cared for is the dream of most parents. Sometimes, in the process of looking for that nirvana, you might find that a daycare that you thought was a good choice is obviously not the right place for your children.

If you have tried unsuccessfully to solve the issues that you have with your children's daycare, it might be time for you to move on to a place that better fits your needs. While this scenario can potentially be unsavory, it is possible to bow out gracefully and leave the daycare center on good terms.

Before making an announcement to the staff of your daycare, check the agreement that you signed when enrolling to see how much notice must be given.

In some cases, a center will require two weeks notice or more, just as you would be asked to give when leaving a job. In extreme circumstances, the daycare may waive the notice, but in most cases, you will be bound by the contract and responsible to pay for care during that period, whether or not your child attends.

Speak with the director or supervisor of the daycare center first, when it is time to remove your child. Be sure to explain to them, in the nicest way possible, why you are leaving and let them know if there was anything that they could have done differently to have prevented this from happening.

If the problem that is causing you to leave was on a classroom level, the director may not have been made aware of what was going on. While it might be too late to change your mind, it could create a better experience for other parents and children.

When explaining why you are leaving, be sure not to point fingers in a way that might anger those who are caring for your child, especially if you are giving notice and your child will continue to attend.

In some cases, if you must leave your child at the center, waiting until the last day to explain why you are leaving might be best. This will prevent any problem staff members from taking out their frustration with you on your child.

Above all, do not feel guilty about removing your child from a daycare situation where either or both of you are not happy. Your job as a parent is to do what is best for your child and making the decision of who will be caring for your child when you are working is extremely important.

Though having to fire a babysitter or daycare provider is certainly not a pleasant task, as long as you are considerate and take the necessary steps to protect your child, the end result will be a happy one.

Conclusion

There are many new things that come into a parent's life when they seek out childcare. Some of them may be painful, such as learning how to get over feelings of anxiety and guilt.

On the other hand, some of these new experiences can bring a lot of joy. Imagine how proud you will feel when your child takes on a leadership role in welcoming a new child into the daycare or how you will feel when they give you a craft project they created for Mother's Day.

Childcare providers can become part of your child's extended family. Who wouldn't want more caring, loving people in their child's life?