

Tip Sheets

Questions to Ask When Seeking Child Care: Setting Your Child Up for Success

When seeking child care, how do you find the information you need to set your child up for success and avoid expulsion? As you interview perspective caregivers, it is helpful to be proactive and begin with the questions below. Share your child's strengths, and then based on the caregiver's answers, you can also have a conversation about some of your child's unique needs and what tends to create success.

Tell me about the training your staff receives around child development, positive behavior guidance, and social emotional development.

This gives you a picture of what is important to the site as far as training. Training and background in these areas will be critical for the success of your child. It is important that caregivers are trained in more than the basics of Child Development, they should also be skilled in inclusion, children's mental health, and know where to go for support when needed.

How long have your staff have been at your site?

Longevity is a sign of happy staff that are supported and treated well. High turnover is a challenge for young children because they are continually forced to adapt and connect with new adults. This can produce more behaviors. Consistency is the key, so staff who have stayed 5+ years is a positive sign in most cases.

What are your policies around safety and behavior guidance?

There should be written policies in the child care setting's handbook that outline their processes when challenges occur, including information about how they communicate with parents (ideally, the more the better). You should be concerned about policies that have a "three strikes and you're out" tone or those that involve calling parents to pick up their child. Reaching out to parents to "save the day" creates patterns for the child in which they learn if they act-out they get to go home.

How does your staff support each other when help is needed? Do you work together to develop strategies when one is struggling with a concern or a challenge?

Teamwork is sign of a healthy work environment. Employees who feel alone and overwhelmed are more likely to have a lower tolerance for challenges. When a child care setting builds a supportive community, there are more opportunities for the team to learn new and useful skills from each other, which will build the ability to cope when things get difficult. Involved and supportive directors are also important.

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