

FAMILY WELLNESS

Choosing Childcare Settings

- Setting choices
- Questions to ask
- Resources to find the best choice for you



Choosing a childcare setting can be overwhelming. How do you pick the right place for your family?

The first step in choosing a childcare for your family is to consider the setting. There are many choices, including center-based, home-based, a nanny, having a family member care for your child(ren), and others.

Families appreciate that center-based care has more accountability for their employees, often has more structure and curriculum, and care for children in dedicated age groups. Home-based care carries benefits as well, including smaller,

multi-aged groups, and a more home-like environment. Additionally, families who choose to hire a nanny or family member to care for their child(ren) value the individualized care. Some families may share this caregiver with another family to save costs. Regardless of the setting that you choose, your family should feel confident in the care that your child(ren) will receive and choose a caregiver who provides an environment that matches your family's needs.

Vetting the Setting

Ask questions to find the right fit

"What qualifications do your teachers have?"

Childcare teachers may have lived experience in their field, a Child Development Associates Degree (CDA), a Bachelors degree in Early Childhood Education (BA), or advanced degrees, like a Masters of Education (MS). Because it is the teacher or caregiver spending the most time with your child, this person will impact your child's experience more than anything else.

"What is your program's daily schedule?"

Young children learn best through play. Programs that spend large chunks of the day in open play--rather than lots of instruction or "circle time"--are reflecting developmentally appropriate practices. Other things to look for in the schedule are lots of outdoor time, opportunities for movement and active play, and "family-style meals" shared with peers and teaching staff.

"Does your program have any accreditations or are you working towards any improvement goals?"

Many high quality programs are accredited by The National Association for the Education of Young Children, or NAEYC. This accreditation indicates a very high quality program. In Nebraska, programs may enroll in the "Step up to Quality" initiative. Rankings show how far along in the program care centers are. A higher ranking indicates a higher quality program, and programs may progress from year-to-year.

"What is your rate of staff and student turnover?"

A low rate of staff turnover indicates that staff are happy in their positions and well cared for by the management. Teacher satisfaction will greatly influence the experience that your child has in that classroom. A low rate of student turnover indicates that families are comfortable in the program and aren't feeling the need to make changes mid-year.

Play is the work of the child

– MARIA MONTESSORI

Resources

to help with your search

- Use the [Nebraska Childcare Referral Network](#) with many filter settings
- Search for [NAEYC Accredited](#) programs
- Search for Programs enrolled in [Step Up to Quality](#), and see current rankings for Nebraska Care Centers
- A list of [Pros, Cons, and Costs](#) of different care setting choices
- Check list of [things to look for](#) when you tour a care setting
- Additional [questions to ask](#) when choosing a care setting

