

Day Care Checklist/Interview Questions

Use these questions to guide your search for a quality Day Home. Visits can be as short as 15 minutes or as long as a hour, the more time you can spend, the more questions you ask, the better you will feel about your decision.

A good provider has been in business for awhile, has good references, has clear rules and regulations, a firm sick-child policy and emergency back-up care.

Does the caregiver appear to be warm and loving?

Is the caregiver sensitive to children and their needs?

Are the children listened to and talked *with*, not *at*?

Does the caregiver get down to the children's level to talk to them?

Does the caregiver appear happy and confident?

Is the caregiver involved with the children or just directing their activities?

Is the caregiver a smoker? Does she smoke around the children?

Does the caregiver have training and experience in caring for your age of child? How many years?

Does the caregiver have basic Child First Aid/CPR training? Is it posted and up-to-date?

Does the caregiver have liability insurance on her house and vehicle?

Does the caregiver have a Police Clearance Check?

Does the caregiver have references?

Are there smoke detectors and fire extinguishers?

How often does the caregiver have fire drills? Where do they go for safety? Meeting place?

Are toxic substances inaccessible to the children?

Are stairs barricaded if there are young children in care?

Are play areas and equipment clean, safe and well maintained? How often are they cleaned and replaced?

What type of cleaning products are used? Does she use products with a DIN? (Drug identification number).

If caregiver has problems answering any of these questions, that should be a Red Flag and you need to continue your search.

Is the outdoor play area fenced?

Are electrical outlets covered or new Tamper proof outlets installed?

Are rooms clean, bright and well ventilated?

Are facilities for food preparation clean and safe?

Do children receive nutritious meals and snacks?

Are meals modified for allergies if necessary?

Do children have a rest or nap time each day?

Do each child have his/her own crib/cot/bed? Is there a consistent, clear daily routine? Is there enough flexibility in the routine to accommodate individual children's needs and creativity?

Are there activities which encourage children to think, to be creative, to explore, to express themselves, to problem solve and to relate well to others?

Are there lot's of play materials of different types? (Art supplies, Science experiments, sand and water play, blocks, rhythm instruments, dress-up corner, books, music, etc)

Are there many opportunities for the child to grow as an individual?

Does the caregiver plan activities that recognize each child's cultural background?

Is there quiet time as well as active play?

Are there field trips within the community, the Zoo or other educational places?

Do the children appear to be interested and involved rather than bored?

Is the caregiver able to explain discipline policies to you? Is she open to your input?

Is discipline handled in such a way that is not hurtful, frightening, Intimidating or Injurious to the children?

Does the caregiver's method of discipline seem appropriate to the age of the child? Are you OK with the method of discipline?

How are incidents involving two or more children handled?

What kinds of behaviour does the caregiver see as problem behaviour?

What kinds of behaviour does the caregiver see as problem behaviour?

Does the caregiver explain rules clearly and reinforce positive behaviour?

Do the children appear happy? Is there a lot of laughing, hugging, caring?

Are the children encouraged to care about and respect each other?

Is spontaneity encouraged?

Does the caregiver greet and talk with each child/parent as they arrive/leave?

Is there parent involvement in the program and are parents encouraged to communicate with each other?

Is the emphasis on cooperation not competition?

Does the caregiver's philosophy about children agree with yours?

Are parents encouraged to visit at any time?

Does it feel like 'your kind of place'?

Some extra questions you might like to ask.

How long has the caregiver been in business?

Is she licensed? With what agency?

Does she have other accreditations? If so, what are they?

How many children does she provide care for at one time?

Does she have space for your child?

Does she have a waiting list? What is the deposit to hold a spot?

What are the fees?

Are there sibling discounts?

Is there a early drop-off, late pick-up fee?

Do I pay when my child is ill or when we are on vacation?

Do we pay when the provider is on vacation?

When is payment for care due, beginning or end of the month? Any late payment fees?

You don't have to ask all these questions. Pick the ones that are important to you and your situation. Remember, you're interviewing for a very important job. Your angle will be with this person for most of the day and for many years. By asking as many questions as possible, you will cover all bases and make the transition as easy as possible.

Does the caregiver supply diapers, wipes or are these up to the parent?
What other supplies would I need to bring for my child?
Do I leave these at the day home?

Does the caregiver encourage visits from the parents?
What do you expect from me as the parent?
How does the caregiver communicate with the parent. Will there be daily reports or other ways of informing parents of daily activities the child has done during the day (naps, bottles, BM's ect)
Can I bring my child in for a pre-enrolment visit?

Ask the caregiver if she has any formal early childhood development or childcare training?
Why do you work with children? What do you like the most/the least about caring for children?
How do you discipline children?
How do you comfort children?
How long have you had Child CPR/First Aid training?

If caregiver has an assistant, is the caregiver licensed with the City? (If there is a paid helper, there are different laws that take effect).
If no assistant, who covers for caregiver for Doctor appointments, holidays, emergencies?

The caregiver should be responsible, enthusiastic, well prepared and shares your philosophies on key childbearing issues such as sleep, discipline and feeding.

A good day home will have many programs and activities for the children so that they don't get bored and have a chance to learn new skills. TV and videos should play little or have no part in the day's schedule.
Ask about TV time.

Are the toy's and activities age-appropriate? Ask what kind of activities will be done during an average day. Can you see a daily schedule?
Is there a comfortable, childproofed indoor play area for your child to safely play?
Is there a safe, enclosed outside play area that encourages large-motor skills? (running, climbing, jumping). Does the play area have a proper surface as per health regulations? Escape-proof?
Are the children ever left unattended?

Does the caregiver potty-train? What type of potty-training methods does she use?

A good day-home is clean and sanitary and observes basic safety rules. If you see poorly maintained equipment or the place seems dingy or cramped, keep looking.

Must the children be immunized in order to attend?
What is the sick-child policy?
What if my child needs medication during the day?
Do you allow smoking in the house?

Does the caregiver wash her hands before and after changing diapers and before feeding the children?

Are the children taught to wash their hands before and after eating as well as after using the potty? Are there stools by the sink to make it easier for children to wash hands? Soap accessible? Clean towels or paper towel?

Does the caregiver require parents to sign-in and out? Are the doors secure so that strangers can't just walk in?

What is their release policy? Who may pick-up your child?

Does the caregiver receive visitors (not affiliated with the day-home) during business hours?

Is the emergency plan posted insight? What are the procedures, meeting place etc, in case of an emergency?

If the day home provides meals, they should be nutritious (covering all 5 food groups) and snacks. For sleeping, bedding should be fresh (cleaned regularly) and firm (to reduce the risk of SIDS for babies) and nap area should be clean and quiet.

Where do children sleep? Do they have their own designated cots and bedding?

Do they have a nap schedule?

Does the caregiver place babies on their back to sleep and use sleep sacks as well as follow other safe sleep practices to reduce the risk of SIDS?

Be sure to take a moment to ask yourself the following questions when you visit.

Do the children seem happy and engaged?

Are the crying children responded to immediately?

Does the caregiver cuddle babies? Talk directly to the children? Is her tone friendly and caring?

Is the home clean and pleasant?

Is the bathroom a pleasant setting, encouraging children to use it?

Are appropriate safety measures (fire extinguisher, first aid kit, safety gates, tamper proof outlets, all blind cords safely out of the way etc) in place?

Ask each day-home you're considering, for a list of past and present references...and Call Them.

Ask specific questions: Instead of asking what they liked about the day-home, ask what exactly they did and didn't like about it. If their child is no longer there, ask why..

These are just some questions to help you make your decision easier but it all comes down to who you feel is the best person to look after your child. Go into the interview like you were interviewing someone for a top executive position because she will be with your child for up-to 10 hours each day and you need feel safe knowing your child will be receiving the best possible care. If you don't feel comfortable leaving your child at the day home, how are you going to give 100% at work??

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