

Making the Child Care Choice

Parents making the child care choice should take time to interview providers, visit child care facilities and prepare themselves and their children for this significant transition in a child's life. Taking the time to do this research will lessen the stress of this major decision and ensure the best possible child care situation to meet your family's needs.

Initial Interview

If possible, conduct an initial interview on the phone with various providers. During that time, ask the provider:

- If there are any openings.
- About hours and location.
- About the payment structure, including payment due dates.
- About fees charged for things such as supplies or late pickups.
- About cost differences in part-time or full-time care.
- If meals and snacks are provided.
- About transportation options.
- How many children are in the provider's care.
- How many adults provide care.
- About the core providers' education and experience.

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Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) program staff at MSU Extension can answer questions or help you learn more about money management, parent, food, nutrition and health issues. MSU Extension educators integrate university and community resources to provide tools that help families succeed. For more information on FCS programs in Michigan, call your county MSU Extension office. Check the government pages of your phone book for contact information.

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Site Visit

Visit child care facilities to gather more information. Look for:

- A caring and responsive provider.
- Positive relationships between provider and children.
- A fun learning environment where children can choose from a variety of experiences and toys, both indoors and outdoors.
- Clean, safe spaces and play areas.
- Current licensing information, including CPR and first aid training.

Ask the provider:

- How parents are involved.
- About discipline policies.
- How emergency situations, including sick children, are handled.
- For references from parents of children who are in the provider's care.

Choose your Child Care

After talking with parent references, compile and review all of the information you have gained from your research. Choosing child care is one of the most important decisions you will make, and it takes hard work to make a good decision. Trust your gut instincts and be choosy about the type of care you select.

- Prepare your child by talking with him/her about the new child care arrangements.
- Be positive and enthusiastic, letting him/her know that you are excited about this new opportunity.
- Visit the provider together to help your child ease into this new situation.
- Stay involved with your child and your provider so that the child care experience will be a positive one for everyone involved.

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Sources:

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