

## Choosing a Quality Child Care Centre

For many parents/guardians, staying at home to raise children is either not a preference or not an option. If you have determined that group care is the right choice for your family, choosing a quality childcare setting is vital to your peace of mind, allowing you to focus on your daily tasks without worrying about the care and well-being of your child.

Choosing a day care centre need not be a daunting task. For an in-depth discussion on this topic, refer to *Choosing Child Care: A Guide to Licensed and Approved Child Care in Alberta*:  
<http://www.humanservices.alberta.ca/documents/choosing-child-care.pdf>

**Listen to your intuition, ask the important questions, and you will surely secure a quality child care centre for your most precious gift of all—your child.**

**Develop a short list.** Identify your child's and your family's needs. Begin your search by phoning day care centres and discussing whether they will meet your needs.

**Screen your choices.** Once you have a list of possibilities, visit the day care centres and view their daily operations. Prepare to spend an hour or more at each site.

- Day care centres are licensed by the government and must uphold stringent regulations, but you should also choose one whose philosophy and care routines fit your needs.

**Know what you're looking for.** The following list covers a few critical points that may be overlooked when choosing a child care centre. Ask questions so you are sure of the answers.

- Meet with the director and take a tour. Look around for hazards and pay attention to the overall safety of the centre.
- Ask to view the licensing reports, prepared regularly by government day care inspectors. These reports show whether a centre is in compliance with standards—and whether any infractions have occurred, or disciplinary actions have been taken.
- Scrutinize staff members' interactions with the children. Are staff warm, encouraging, and respectful? Are they actively engaged in playing with the children, role modelling, and assisting with cooperative play?
- What type of discipline or guidance do the caregivers engage in? Is this philosophy in keeping with yours?
- Are staff trained in first aid? What level of first aid do they have, and how many staff carry that level of training on each shift?
- Consider the children's daily activities. Is the schedule balanced and flexible, with both free play and structured times? Are they outside every day?
- Are there play centres and enough safe, age-appropriate toys for everyone? These features are required by law and inspected by the licensing department.
- Review the meal calendar, which should be posted for parents to view.
- Observe the diaper changing area. Is it clean? Do staff wash their hands after every diaper change? Are the children assisted or reminded to wash their hands?
- Do the children appear happy and relaxed? How do you feel in the environment? Listen to your intuition, and never go against it!

**“Prevention Is the Key to Safety”**

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[www.childsafecanada.com](http://www.childsafecanada.com)