

CHOOSING CHILD CARE

You will want to choose quality child care for your child. It can be a challenge to find a child care arrangement you feel comfortable with. Here are some ideas that might help you make your choice.

A Quality Child Care Program Has:

- clean and safe space
- warm and friendly caregivers
- indoor and outdoor play
- healthy food
- many play and learning activities
- a daily routine

Child care can be provided in your home, in someone else's home or in a centre. Quality child care meets the needs of your child and your family. Take the time to visit several child care programs and meet several caregivers. This will help you learn what is best for you and for your child.

Before Looking for Child Care, Think About:

- The hours and days you need care
- Your child's age and experience
- How much you can pay
- If you want child care in your home, or near your home, work, or school

Gather Information:

Find out as much as you can about child care. You can:

- Call your health department
- Phone the Child Care Resource and Referral Program (CCRR)
- Look at the newspaper
- Read bulletin boards at your community centre, neighbourhood house or family place
- Ask at your nearest school
- Talk to neighbours, friends, relatives, and people at work

Contact Caregivers:

Here are some questions you can ask:

- Is there a space for your child?
- Is the program licensed?
- Is the caregiver registered?
- What is the caregiver's experience and training in child care?
- How much does it cost?

You can phone to ask these questions and more! Sometimes, caregivers will be busy with the children and may want to call you back.

Arrange a visit if you are interested. You may want to visit a few times to learn about the program.

When You Visit:

Look around

- Is the space safe and clean?
- Are there many toys and activities?
- Do you feel comfortable about your child being there?

Watch the caregiver with the children

- Do they like being together?
- Do you feel comfortable with the way she talks to the children?
- Has she planned activities for the day?

Look at the other children

- Do they enjoy their activities and each other?
- Can they choose their own activities?
- Do they come to the caregiver easily to talk and ask for help?

Discuss the program and ask about:

- Sickness Policy
- Discipline Policy
- Vacations
- Field trips
- Visitors
- Other questions you have

Make Your Decision:

Before you make a final decision, it's a good idea to talk to other parents who know the caregiver or the child care program. You can ask them about the same kinds of things that you looked for when you visited the caregiver.

Expect to sign a written letter that describes the details of the child care arrangement. If there is no letter, ask for one. You and the caregiver need to read it carefully together. Once you have made your decision, both you and the caregiver will need to sign the letter.

Gradual Entry

It is a good idea for children to come for short periods of time at first. This "gradual entry" will help your child feel comfortable. Discuss gradual entry with the caregiver. Set times to suit your family, your child, your schedule and the child care program.

Your Relationship with the Caregiver

It is important for you to get along with the caregiver. Take some time every day to talk with the caregiver. Let her know you appreciate the care she gives your child. Talk about any worries you have about your child's care or behaviour.

For More Information:

There are people in your community you can talk to about child care. For more information in Vancouver, please contact Westcoast Family Information and Referral at 604-709-5699 or fir@wstcoast.org. For information about Child Care Resource and Referral Programs in BC visit <http://www.ccr.bc.ca/>

If you have any serious concerns about a caregiver or child care program you can call enquiry BC toll-free 1 800 663-7867 and ask to be connected to your health authority's Community Care Licensing Office.