

Solutions

FAMILY SERVICES  EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

NEWSLETTER

Issue 13

CHOOSING CHILD CARE

At some time during the child rearing years, parents will require non-parental care for their children. Whether this is due to a return to work, or simply to allow parents to attend social events, finding quality childcare will require careful consideration. Time spent exploring choices will help to ensure that your child receives the best possible care, specific to your situation and to your needs. In households where the parent(s) work full time outside the home, this may be an opportunity to evaluate how to balance work and family life. Depending on employer flexibility, career aspirations, and financial situations, consideration may be given to job-sharing, working more flexible hours, or working from the home.

Exploring Options

The type of care you choose for your child will depend on your child's needs, your needs, and the type of care available in your community. In most communities, options vary from licensed daycare centres and home to nanny services or informal arrangements. Caregivers who regularly spend several

hours a week with your child should support positive emotional, intellectual and physical growth in your child. At time, finding quality care that meets your needs may seem overwhelming. However, the more positive you are, the more positive your child will be. Non-parental care can offer social and educational opportunities for children with a warm, nurturing caregiver.

Licensed or Non-Licensed Care?

Licensed care is available in daycare centres and special family day homes. To be licensed they must meet provincial requirements concerning such things as caregiver ratio, group size, space per child, nutrition, health and safety features and outdoor play spaces. **Your local EAP service provider can assist you to locate licensed childcare facilities.** Unlicensed care includes employing nannies, private babysitters, friends or relatives. If you choose to have someone provide care in your own home, you are an employer and you should be aware of labour legislation that applies to you. Contact your provincial Labor Standards Branch to find out about your obligations.

CHOOSING CHILD CARE (CONTINUED)

Step by Step

The following steps will assist you in choosing childcare:

1. Determine your family's needs. To find the best care for your child, you must take into consideration your child's social, emotional, intellectual, and physical development as well as his/her personality. Consider such things as your child's level of activity and need for structured play, how he/she interacts in a large group, the importance of consistent discipline, the need for a balance of active and quiet play, and the type of experiences you would like your child to have. Beyond your child's needs, it is important to consider your own schedule, your need for care in close proximity to work or home, your need for the child to have meals while in care or to be with siblings.
2. After making initial contact with a home or centre consider the following: What are the caregiver's qualifications? Do they provide references? What is the number and age range of the children enrolled and any of the care providers own children? What is the policy regarding payment for days when a child is absent, for sick days of the care provider and for vacations? Are there extra charges beyond the normal fees? Are tax receipts provided? What is the program for a typical day/week? What are the lunch and snack provisions? Are there any special features of the program?
3. Interview the care provider or centre staff. Set a time when you can observe the facility and take your child along. Note your general impression of the overall environment and your child's reactions. Ask specific questions about staff or care provider's qualifications. Ask to see equipment and toys. Ask about activities and the daily routine, including outings and what arrangements are made to ensure safety on the outings. Ask about alternates and substitutes. Who else might be looking after your child if the caregiver is ill, on vacation, or has an emergency? Discuss who else may be in contact with your child such as the care provider's spouse, teenage children, boarders, and neighbours. You have a right to screen anyone who may be involved with your child. Ask specific questions such as, "What do you do when a child in your care bites another child?" Ask for references.

Trust your instincts!

If a potential care facility does not feel right to you, maybe it isn't.

Family Services offers confidential professional assistance on a wide variety of personal and work-related issues. For more information on your EAP, call:

1-800-668-9920