

CHILD CARE



Choose as carefully as your child would

**HOW YOU CAN MAKE
A GOOD CHOICE**

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
OFFICE OF CHILDREN AND ADULT LICENSING

CHOOSING A CHILD CARE PROVIDER

WHAT PARENTS SHOULD LOOK FOR IN A CHILD CARE PROVIDER

A child's physical and mental health is influenced by the kinds of toys he plays with, the food he eats, the care and attention he receives from adults, and the atmosphere and personality of the child care home or center.

Choosing a place where your child will be cared for is a very important decision. Your child's future is at stake. Be selective. Begin looking well in advance of when you need the child care. Take your time in making your decision. Visit the program. Involve your child in making the decision. Allow for a trial period. Plan for backup caregivers.

As a parent you should first consider what kind of arrangement is best for you and your child. The following briefly describes the various **types of child care providers**:

- 1. Child Care Centers:** A facility, other than a residence, licensed by the Department of Human Services to care for children. In this setting:
 - Activities may be structured for different age groups.
 - Specialized services such as field trips, swimming lessons, and transportation may be available.
 - Full- or half day care may be offered.
 - Parents may often be involved in policy making decisions and center operations.
 - Meals and snacks are usually provided.



2. **Family Child Care Homes:** A private home, other than the child's relative's home, that is registered with the Department to care for no more than six children.
3. **Group Child Care Home:** A private home, other than the child's or relative's home, that is licensed by the Department to care for 7 to 12 children.

In a Family and Group Child Care Home setting

- The child experiences a family/homelike environment.
- There is generally some flexibility as to hours and days.
- Children can receive care from infancy through school age.
- Meals and snacks are provided.
- Children are not separated by age.



4. **In Home Child Care Aide:** A person who cares for children in the children's own home. Certification by the local Department of Human Services is necessary when the Agency pays for this care.

In-Home Child Care may:

- Be very convenient for you.
- Provide more flexibility than out-of-home child care.
- Give your child more of a feeling of security in familiar surroundings.

Be sure to look for and/or ask the potential child care provider about the following: *[Questions a parent might ask will vary depending on the type of child care provider selected.]*

1. Make sure the provider is licensed or registered by the Michigan Department of Human Services. Ask to see the provider's current license/registration.
2. If child care costs are to be paid by the State, check to see that the provider has been approved for payment by the Department of Human Services.
3. Look for a clean, wholesome atmosphere:

- Examine play, sleeping or napping, food preparation and bathroom areas. They should be clean with ample space for the number of children in care.



- Cleaning supplies, medicines and other hazardous materials should either be locked up or well out of the reach of children.
- Wood burners should be protected.
- Stairs should be protected by gates.
- Unused electrical outlets should be capped.
- There should be adequate play space outdoors and the area should be a safe place to play. A yard cluttered with junk and broken or rusty play equipment is inviting an accident.
- Check on the play area's protection from busy streets and water hazards, including pools.

4. Know about procedures for emergencies and contacting parents.
 - Individual child care information cards should be kept readily accessible in case a child is injured.
 - Fire and tornado drills should be routinely practiced.
5. Notice the attitude of the adult caregivers and the way they interact with the children. This is often the best way to determine whether you would want your child in the care of this provider.

For example:

- Do the children in care appear happy?
- Is discipline given with care and understanding and without physical or emotional abuse?
- Are diapers of young children changed promptly?
- Are babies held in a loving way during feeding and at other times?



- Are the caregivers:
 - Calm and gentle?
 - Interacting well with children individually?
 - Effective in the way they direct group activities?
 - Interacting with all of the children in a warm and friendly manner?
 - Spending a reasonable portion of the day doing planned activities with the children?

6. Observe and discuss the type of indoor and outdoor activities which are planned.

- There should be a variety of creative toys and materials for the children to use.
- There should be some time allowed for the children to choose their own activities and pursue their own interests.
- Adult direction is always available to the children when required.



- There should be a fairly consistent schedule for children from one day to another.
- Field trips and other enriching experiences should be planned for the children.

BEFORE MAKING A FINAL DECISION take your child to visit the program.

Does your child seem to fit in? Talk to your child about the experience. [Ask what she liked and did not like. Explain when and how often he will attend. Tell your child who will drop her off and who will pick her up.]

Here are some additional questions you may want to ask before making your decision on a specific child care setting:

- * What are the hours and days that the child care is open? Will it be open on holidays?
- * How much does it cost? When am I expected to pay? Do I have to pay if my child is sick and does not come? Do I have to pay for holidays when the child care is closed?
- * How many other children will be there? How old are they?
- * Who will be taking care of the children? Will anyone I have not met be taking care of the children?
- * How will children be disciplined?
- * How will my child and other children be taken care of if they are sick? What is the policy?
- * What types of lunches and snacks are provided? (**ask to see menus**)
- * What activities are scheduled throughout the day?
- * What is the policy regarding TV? How often is it on? What programs are children allowed to watch?
- * What are the safety rules?
- * Is transportation provided?
- * Are there limitations on visiting my child?

**REMEMBER -- CHILD CARE IS A
SERVICE YOU ARE BUYING**

Therefore, you have a responsibility to respect the provider's:

- Time Be on time to pick up your child.
- Policies Know when child care payment is due.
- Opinions They usually have plenty of experience.

You have a right to expect:

- Compliance with the rules.
- Safe, nurturing, good care.

You have the responsibility to encourage:

- Open communication.
- Positive happenings.
- Parent involvement.

You have a right to question or discuss:

- Rule violations.
- Unsafe practices that affect or might affect your child.
- What happens when you are not there.
- Anything that upsets your child.



WHAT IF I CAN'T AFFORD TO PAY FOR CHILD CARE?

You may be eligible for financial assistance from the Department of Human Services (DHS) to help cover the costs of child care if you are:

- Of limited income and working.
- A migrant.
- A foster parent
- A member of a Protective Services or Prevention Services Case.
- In a high school completion program.
- A FIP/SFA recipient who is working or in an approved Work First activity or meeting a social contract obligation while in an approved education program.
- A FIP/SFA/FS recipient in an approved MOST activity.

The amount of assistance available, if you are eligible, depends on the following:

- ⇒ Child care setting used.
- ⇒ Age of your child.
- ⇒ County of location.
- ⇒ Number of hours child is in care.
- ⇒ Other relevant factors.

In some cases, eligible families are expected by DHS to contribute to the cost of care.

To determine if you qualify for assistance with child care expenses, contact your local DHS office as soon as you have a need for child care.

AFTER CHILD CARE BEGINS

Each day parents should take time to talk with their child about their child care arrangement. Ask the child very specific questions about his/her day and the events of that day. This can be done when a child is quiet and feeling very secure and protected in the presence of his/her mother or father.

Parents should **listen** to what their child is saying. **Listen** for what the child enjoys, dislikes, or is uncomfortable about. **Listen** for how adults and children interact during the day. Take care not to discount what the child may be saying. When a parent discounts what the child is saying about something serious or “unbelievable” (which may happen), the child will become more and more reluctant to talk about what is happening.

SOME WARNING SIGNALS PARENTS SHOULD BE ALERTED TO:

- ◇ The person/home/center does not permit or encourage parents to observe or visit while children are in care.
- ◇ Children are left in care without the immediate and direct supervision of an adult.
- ◇ The caregiver(s) spend much of their time scolding, ordering, and belittling children. For example: screaming, yelling, or swearing at the children, making fun of a child, ridiculing or threatening a child, criticizing a child.
- ◇ Caregiver(s) are physically rough and abusive with the children.
- ◇ The building or home is filthy and/or unsafe.
- ◇ Complaints from your child about the care, or your child starts to act nervous or distressed about the child care. Investigate immediately.
- ◇ A child repeatedly gets bruises or injuries or the presence of a bruise or injury is unexplainable.



WHAT CAN A PARENT DO WHO HAS A CONCERN ABOUT THE CARE THEIR CHILD IS RECEIVING? Make an appointment with the child care provider to discuss the concern and jointly work out a solution. If the condition continues, call the Lansing office of the Division of Child Day Care Licensing at 517-373-8300 and ask for the telephone number of the regional Child Care Licensing office that serves your community.

Order Quantity: 1,500
Order Cost: \$669.19 (.45 ea)
Approval: DHS Director

The Department of Human Services (DHS) will not discriminate against any individual or group because of race, sex, religion, age, national origin, color, height, weight, marital status, political beliefs or disability. If you need help with reading, writing, hearing, etc., under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are invited to make your needs known to a DHS office in your county.