



# CHOOSING QUALITY CHILD CARE: A FAMILY-FRIENDLY CHECKLIST

Your child's future and their lifelong success are greatly impacted by the interactions they have with caregivers, specifically child care providers, from infancy through their first three to five years. Visiting the child care facilities you are considering will help you assess quality and the fit for your child.

## FIRST IMPRESSIONS

- The space feels clean, safe, and welcoming
- Children seem happy, comfortable, and engaged
- Staff greet children and families warmly when they arrive
- You feel welcome and comfortable asking questions

## SAFETY & HEALTH

- The program is licensed or registered
- Indoor and outdoor play areas are safe and well maintained
- Outdoor play area is fenced and supervised
- Emergency plans are in place and practiced
- Staff are trained in CPR and First Aid
- Children are supervised at all times
- Meals and snacks are healthy and safely prepared

## DAILY ROUTINES

- The daily schedule is predictable but flexible
- Children have time for meals, quiet time, play, and learning
- Transitions (meals, naps, clean-up) are calm and well managed
- Children's individual needs (sleep, food, comfort) are respected

## INCLUSION & INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

- Children of all abilities are welcomed
- Staff are willing to work with families on individual needs
- Differences are respected and included in daily activities

## QUESTIONS YOU MAY WANT TO ASK

- Is the program licensed or registered?
- What is your illness and emergency policy?
- Do you have a behavioral guidance policy?
- How do you include and communicate with families?
- How do you support children with special needs?

## CAREGIVERS & SUPERVISION

- The program is licensed or registered
- Indoor and outdoor play areas are safe and well maintained
- Outdoor play area is fenced and supervised
- Emergency plans are in place and practiced
- Staff are trained in CPR and First Aid
- Children are supervised at all times
- Meals and snacks are healthy and safely prepared

## LEARNING & PLAY

- Activities match children's ages and stages that encourage learning to play
- Children have choices about what to play and who to play with
- There is a mix of active play, quiet time, outdoor/indoor play, and learning time
- Toys and learning materials are safe, interesting, and easy to reach

## FAMILY COMMUNICATION

- Staff share information about your child's day
- You are welcome to visit at any time, and you feel included in your child's care
- Your ideas and questions are welcomed
- Policies about illness, fees, and schedules are clear and available

## POSSIBLE RED FLAGS

- You are not allowed to visit freely
- Caregivers yell, ignore children, or seem overwhelmed
- The space feels unsafe or poorly maintained
- Children appear unhappy or unsupervised

**TAKE YOUR TIME IN CHOOSING A CHILD CARE PROVIDER.  
COMPARE YOUR OPTIONS AND ASK PLENTY OF QUESTIONS.**

## CHILD CARE RESOURCES

406-728-6446  
Toll-Free: 800-728-6446  
[www.ChildCareResources.org](http://www.ChildCareResources.org)

2409 Dearborn Ave, Suite L  
Missoula, MT 59801

