



# Choosing Child Care: A Checklist for Quality

<b>GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	✓	<b>COMMENTS</b>
Is this program licensed? (A business license is NOT a license to care for children.)		
Is the program accredited or participating in Virginia Quality?		
How many of the staff have been employed for over one year? (How long has your child's potential provider been there?)		
What additional fees do you charge? (Absences, vacations, activities, etc.)		
What is the policy regarding medication administration, illness or injury? (Is child care staff trained to give medications? Is there a sick room on-site? Is there a nurse on staff? What if the provider is ill or injured or sick?)		
If the provider allows screen time, what is the content and are there limits? (Does this align with the recommendations set forth by the American Academy of Pediatrics?)		
What is the policy regarding pick up and drop off? (Can you drop off anytime or during specific hours? Who is able to pick up your child and what is the screening process?)		
Does the program welcome parents to visit anytime throughout the day?		
How can parents get involved in the program and/or classroom?		
Is your child's teacher trained in age-specific development?		
How will you be notified of what is happening each day? (Is there an app? Daily sheets? A weekly newsletter? Parent/teacher conferences?)		
How much time is designated for outdoor play each day?		
What is their behavior policy and how do they address misbehavior?		
Is the ratio appropriate for your child's age group(s)? (See back page for more information on ratios and point systems.)		
<b>IS THE ENVIRONMENT SAFE?</b>	✓	<b>COMMENTS</b>
Is the front door locked and secure? (Do you enter with a key, a keycode, or are you visually screened and buzzed in?)		
Are there any guns or weapons on the property? (If so, are they locked and secure?)		
Are the outdoor play areas safe and secure? (ex: Fenced-in play areas, gated pool, playground free of hazards or safety concerns)		
Is everything childproofed by age-appropriate standards? (ex: covers on outlets, safety buckles on chairs, no choking hazards, cleaners locked and out of reach)		
<b>IS THE PROVIDER PREPARED FOR AN EMERGENCY?</b>	✓	<b>COMMENTS</b>
Is your child's teacher trained in First Aid and CPR?		
How will provider communicate with you in the event of an emergency?		
Does the child care program have an emergency plan? How often is it practiced? (ex: plans for fire, tornado, hurricane, intruder, safe place, etc.)		
<b>IF THE TOUR GOES WELL</b>	✓	<b>COMMENTS</b>
Ask for references of families who have used the program		
Ask for copy of parent handbook. (Be sure to understand anything you sign and get a copy.)		
Review inspection records on the VA Dept of Social Services website at <a href="http://www.dss.virginia.gov/facility/search/cc.cgi">www.dss.virginia.gov/facility/search/cc.cgi</a> or by calling (800) 543-7545.		

THINGS TO CONSIDER FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS	✓	COMMENTS
What is the nap routine? Are there safe sleep procedures in place? (ex: sleeping on backs only, sleeping in cribs only, no blankets in cribs, no sleeping in car seats)		
What is the diapering procedure? (Who provides diapers? Is cloth diapering permitted? Is the diapering station sanitary?)		
What is the feeding procedure? (If breastfeeding, is there a private and comfortable place on-site? If formula feeding, who provides the formula? If eating solids, who supplies food? How are food allergies handled?)		
How are the children grouped? (Are crawlers and walkers separated? Do children bond with one primary caregiver?)		
Are children supervised <b>at all times</b> , even when they are sleeping?		
What is your policy regarding infant containers? (If bouncers, walkers, and chairs are allowed is there a limit? Ensure not used for napping.)		
THINGS TO CONSIDER FOR PRESCHOOLERS	✓	COMMENTS
What curriculum do they follow?		
Is there a balance of active and quiet activities throughout the day and experiences planned for all areas of development? (ex: blocks, dramatic play, art, science, books/early literacy)?		
What is the policy regarding lunch and snacks? (Who provides food? If provided, are they healthy and nutritious? Is water always available both indoors and outdoors? Are fresh fruit and vegetables served? How are allergies handled?)		
Do children go on field trips? How are you notified of upcoming trips? (Is this outlined in the handbook?)		
Notice teacher/child interactions and ensure they are positive (Are children greeted with a smile? Does the teacher get down on the child's level to talk?)		
THINGS TO CONSIDER FOR SCHOOL-AGERS	✓	COMMENTS
Is transportation available to and from your child's school?		
Is the program open during school closures? (ex: teacher work days, holidays, breaks, summer, inclement weather, etc.)		
What is the policy regarding lunch and snacks? (Who provides food? If provided, are they healthy and nutritious? Is water always available both indoors and outdoors? Are fresh fruit and vegetables served? How are allergies handled?)		
How does the program handle homework time?		
How does your school-ager feel about the program? Let them weigh in!		
THINGS TO CONSIDER FOR SPECIAL NEEDS	✓	COMMENTS
Do the staff/caregivers have the appropriate training and experience to do so?		
Is the program willing to work with specialists to plan an appropriate program for your child and allow specialists to offer services on site if needed?		
How will your child's teacher/caregiver explain your child's special need to other children in the group?		
Should you need transportation, are they able to accommodate?		

Every child in Virginia is protected by law against child abuse and neglect. Allegations of abuse and neglect are investigated by local departments of social services. The Child Protective hotline number is 1-800-552-7096.

To search for a child care providers inspection record, visit [www.dss.virginia.gov/facility/search/cc.cgi](http://www.dss.virginia.gov/facility/search/cc.cgi) or call 1-800-543-7545. This number can also be used to file a complaint.

#### Child Care Center Ratio Guidelines by Age

Birth - 16 mths	1 : 4
16 mths - 2 yrs	1 : 5
2 - 3 yrs	1 : 8
3 - 4 yrs	1 : 10
5 +	1 : 18

#### Family Child Care Home Point System by Age

Birth - 16 mths	4 pts
16 mths - 2 yrs	3 pts
2 - 4 yrs	2 pts
5 - 9 yrs	1 pts
10 +	0 pts

**Questions?**  
**We can help!**  
**866-KIDS-TLC**

