

Can you
Spot
the
Quality?

*A Guide
to Finding*

*the Right
Child Care Setting*



Table of Contents

The ABC's of Quality	3
Types of Child Care & Ratios	5

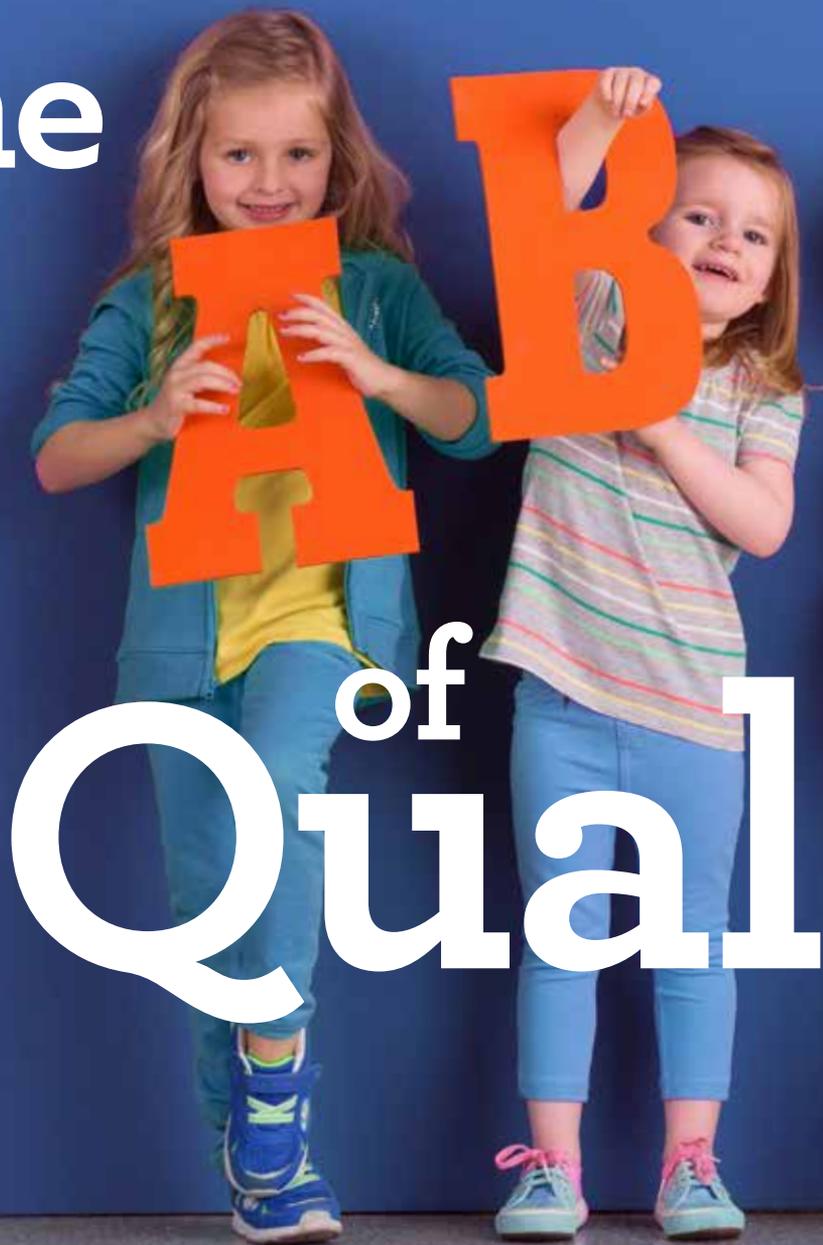
The questions presented in this book will help you choose a child care setting that best suits your child, your family and your work situation. Remember that you are the customer, and your child deserves the very best from the people caring for them.

Each of the categories below are divided into two sections - Questions and Observations. Questions are for you to ask providers, while Observations are mental notes for you to take during the tour you schedule with them.

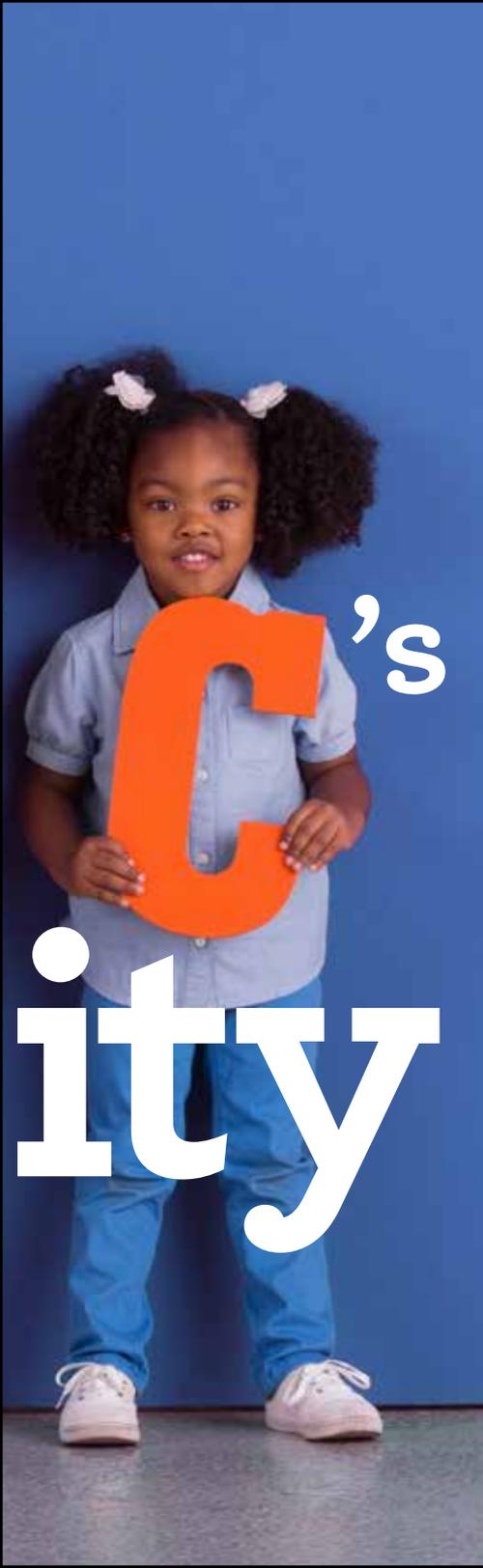
Program & Environment	7
Child Development	9
Health	11
Teachers & Teaching	13
Family Engagement	15
Licensing & Accreditation	17



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Choosing child care may be the most important decision you will make as a parent. Approximately 85% of a child's brain development occurs in the first three years of life. We know that children are influenced primarily by their parents and home environment, but the preschool child of parents who work full-time may spend a major portion of her waking hours in child care. The quality of child care has a direct impact on your child's ability to learn, to build healthy relationships and become the best he or she can be.

Start by searching online for local child care providers in your area. Be mindful of any reviews left by parents who have already enrolled their children in these programs. Once you've done your initial research and found a center that looks promising, give the provider a call and ask about scheduling a visit. Pay attention to the way the phone is answered to the professionalism of the conversation. Once you've scheduled a tour with the administrator, try to coordinate being onsite during an active time of day like free play or outdoor time in order to see the environment in action.

Types of Child

A **Child Care Center** provides care for infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and/or school-age children for all or part of the day. These facilities may be large or small, and can be operated independently by nonprofit organizations or for-profit companies, or by churches, school districts, and other organizations. Most are licensed by the California Department of Social Services (DSS), Community Care Licensing (CCL).



Care & Ratios

A **Family Child Care Home**

(referred to as a FCC or FCCH) must be in the licensee's own home. Care is often provided for children of different ages. The homes are licensed by California Department of Social Services (DSS), Community Care Licensing (CCL).

Proper child/teacher ratios ensure that children get adequate care and attention from providers. These ratios can vary depending on the type of child care you choose, so be sure to observe how many are present during your first visit.

Small FCC (up to 8 children)	Large FCC (up to 14 children)
1 teacher: 4 infants OR 1 teacher: 6 children OR 1 teacher: 6 children, 2 infants	1 teacher, 1 assistant: 12 children, 4 infants OR 1 teacher, 1 assistant: 14 children, 3 infants
Child Care Center (for infants/toddlers ages 0-2)	Child Care Center (for preschoolers ages 2-5)
1 teacher: 4 infants	1 teacher: 12 children

For more information, visit <http://cclcd.ca.gov/PG524.htm>

Program & E



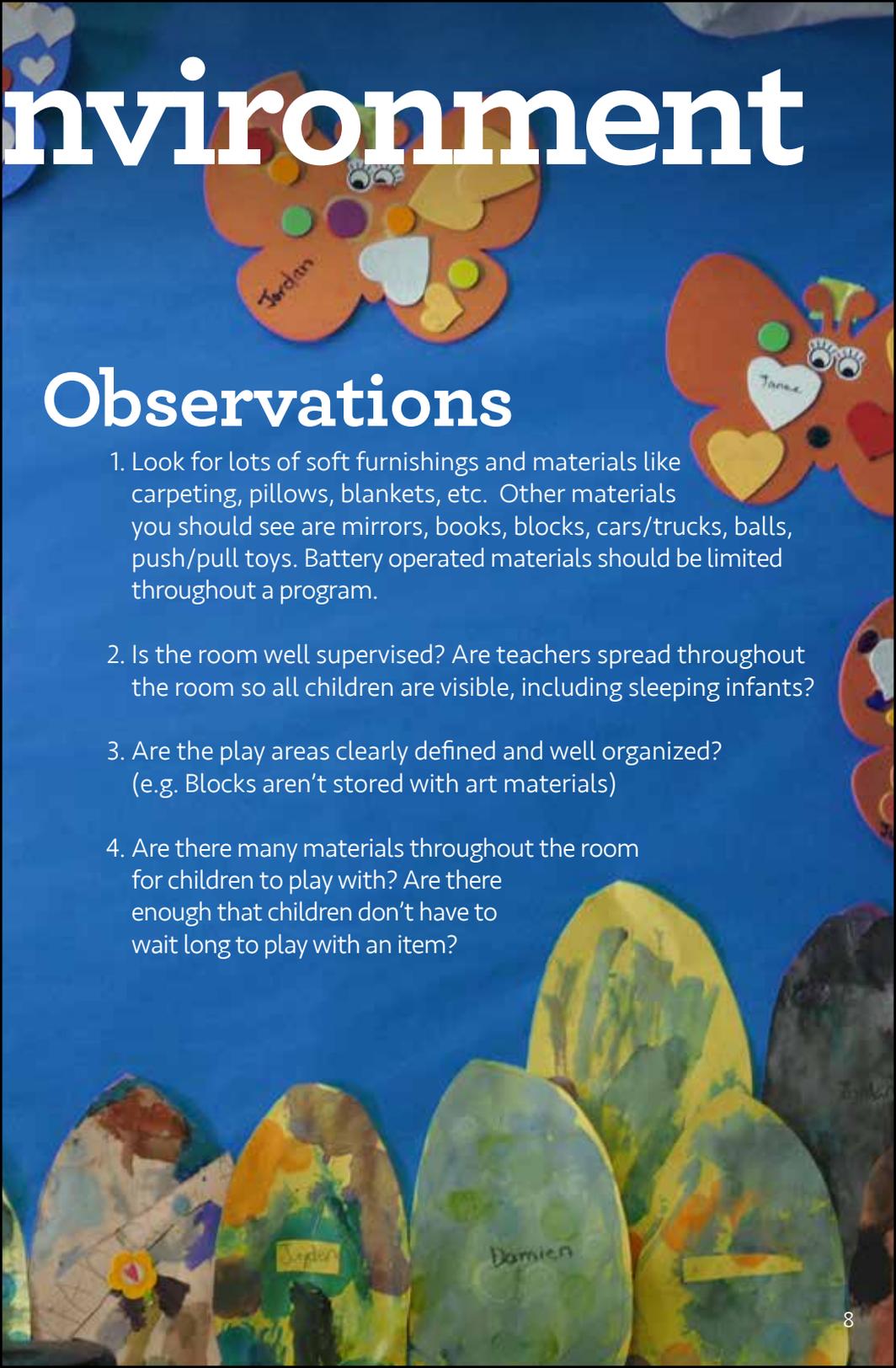
Ideal child care settings are friendly and welcoming places that provide a wide range of activities for your child. There should be plenty of opportunities for your child to be physically active, creative, and social with his or her peers.

Questions

1. How do teachers decide what materials are available to children?
2. How do teachers plan activities or lessons?
3. How much time do children spend outdoors each day?
What do they do?
4. How many children is this room licensed for?
5. What are the teacher/child ratios?
6. What does the daily schedule look like?
7. What are your policies and procedures around diapering/toileting? Feeding? Disinfecting toys?
8. How often do you rotate the toys in the classroom?



Environment



Observations

1. Look for lots of soft furnishings and materials like carpeting, pillows, blankets, etc. Other materials you should see are mirrors, books, blocks, cars/trucks, balls, push/pull toys. Battery operated materials should be limited throughout a program.
2. Is the room well supervised? Are teachers spread throughout the room so all children are visible, including sleeping infants?
3. Are the play areas clearly defined and well organized? (e.g. Blocks aren't stored with art materials)
4. Are there many materials throughout the room for children to play with? Are there enough that children don't have to wait long to play with an item?

Child Dev

Questions

1. How do you measure children's progress and development?
 - a. Is it a formal or informal process?
 - b. How many times a year?
 - c. In all age groups?
2. Do you work with families on screening their children's development?
 - a. How do you use the results?
 - b. Do you have resources, community partners or family support networks to assist if any questions arise?
3. What type of curriculum do you follow?
 - a. How does the program help develop:
 - i. Social-emotional skills?
 - ii. Cognitive skills?
 - iii. Physical skills?
 - iv. Creative skills?
4. Do teachers work with children individually, in small groups and large groups? How much time is spent in each?

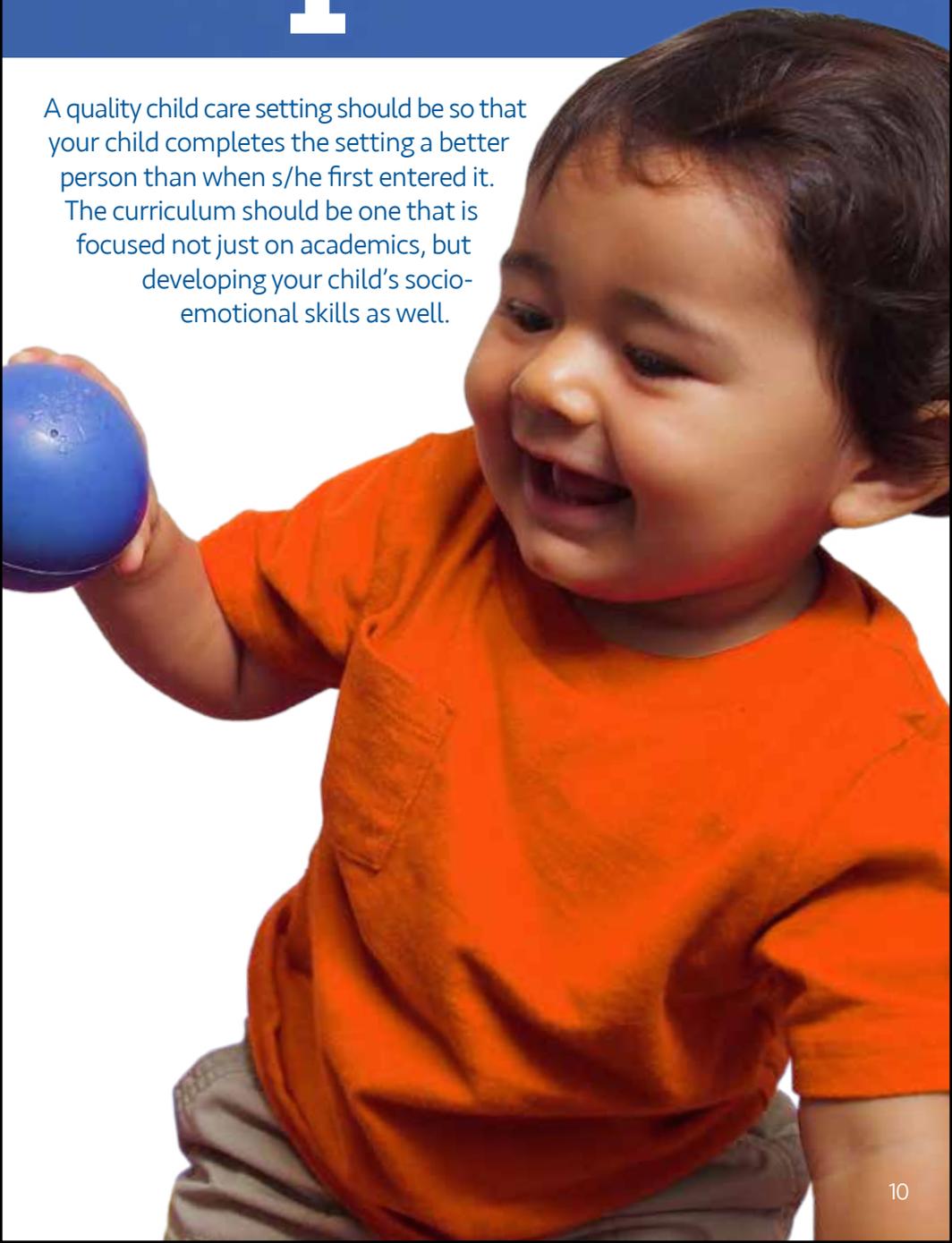
Observations

1. Do the children seem engaged in their classroom routines?
2. Are the children involved in activities that promote their learning?
 - a. Literacy
 - b. Math/Science
 - c. Social-Emotional
3. Is there a plan for children and families who will be transitioning to Kindergarten? What kinds of activities are included in the plan?
4. Do teachers work with children individually, in small groups and large groups? How much time is spent in each?

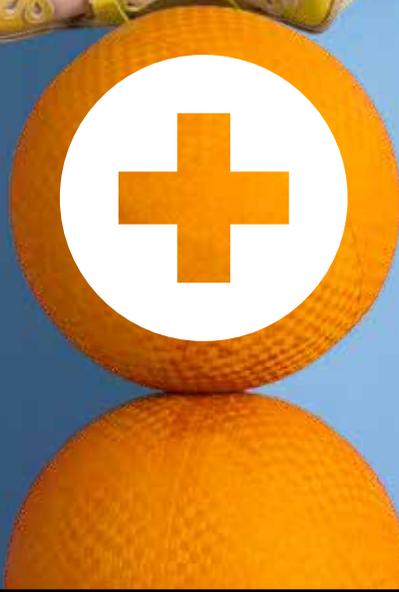
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A quality child care setting should be so that your child completes the setting a better person than when s/he first entered it.

The curriculum should be one that is focused not just on academics, but developing your child's socio-emotional skills as well.



Health



Health and safety should be a major priority for any child care setting. While children are naturally curious and love to explore, they should be in an environment that allows them to do so without being put at risk. Potential accidents and hazards should all be taken into consideration, and child care settings should also teach healthy habits like hand washing, nutrition, and seat belt use.

Questions

1. What is the policy on sick children?
2. Can you tell me about your emergency procedures?
3. What is the procedure on cleaning toys? The classrooms?
4. How many staff are CPR and First Aid trained?
5. Do you provide snacks or meals?
6. How do you choose what to serve?
7. What if my child has allergies or my family has food preferences?
8. What do you serve the children to drink?

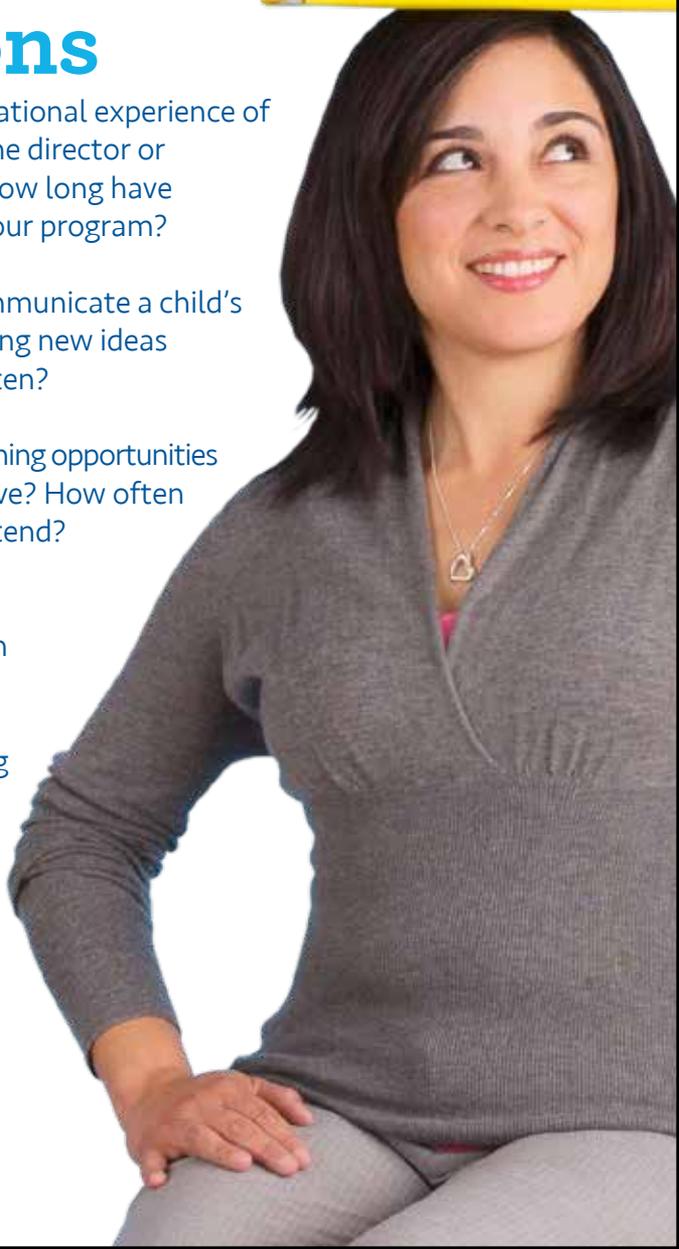
Observations

1. Is the indoor environment clean and organized?
2. Are there any unappealing scents?
3. Are hazardous materials locked away?
4. Is the license posted?
5. Look to see if electrical plugs are covered and electrical cords are out of children's reach. Are there any holes or tripping hazards?

Teacher

Questions

1. What is the educational experience of your teachers? The director or administrator? How long have they been with your program?
2. How do they communicate a child's progress in learning new ideas or skills? How often?
3. What kinds of training opportunities does the staff have? How often do they get to attend?
4. How does staff communicate with parents about their child's day (including diapering and feeding for infants)?



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Teachers and caregivers may be the most essential part of your child care.

Be sure to choose a program with experienced, friendly, and professional staff committed to helping your children become the best they can be.

Observations

1. Are teachers patient and receptive to each child's needs?
2. Do the teachers seem to be enjoying their interactions with children? Are they smiling? Down on the floor sitting closely with them?
3. What do teachers do when a child becomes upset? Do they react right away?
4. Watch for and listen how teachers talk to the children.
5. How frequently are the teachers talking to children?

Family Engagement



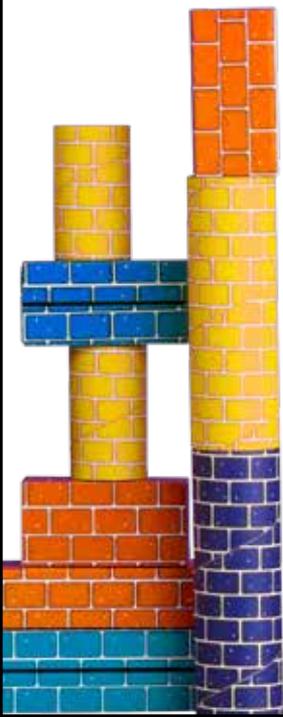
The role you play in your child's education extends far beyond choosing a child care setting. The right setting can offer many opportunities to connect with other parents, track your child's progress throughout the year, and volunteer at your program to make your child's experience that much more memorable.

Questions

1. Do you have a parent handbook?
2. How can parents be involved in the program?
3. Can I visit at any time?
4. Does the program have a place or system where parents can access community resources especially in times of need?
5. How often do you hold parent meetings? What topics are covered?
6. How do you keep individual parents updated on their child's progress? How often?
7. Do you have current or previous parents I could contact for a reference?

Observations

1. If a parent is picking up or dropping off their child, watch how the staff including teachers interact with them and the child.
2. Are there parent boards in classrooms? In the entryway?
3. Review the content of those boards. Is there parenting information? Upcoming events? Community resources?



Licensing &

The California Community Care Licensing Division with the Child Care Licensing program licenses and monitors family child care homes and childcare centers in an effort to ensure children are in safe and healthy environments. As defined by Community Care Licensing, infants and toddlers are children under two, while preschoolers are children 2-5 years old.

For more information about licensed facilities throughout California, visit <http://cclد.ca.gov/PG3581.htm>



Accreditation

Questions

1. When was your last visit from Community Care Licensing?
2. Did you receive any violations? If so, what were they?
How did you fix them?
3. Are you participating in a Quality Rating and Improvement System?
Which one? Have you received a rating?
4. Are you currently accredited by another organization like the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or the National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC)?





Providers displaying this seal are participating in a Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS). Ask them what this participation means and how it's helping the children enrolled in their program.

To learn more, visit
LAUP.net

