

## **Doing Your Research**

Once you have submitted your request through our system, you will begin receiving communication directly from the providers who have openings for your child.

As you begin your communication with the various providers you will be able to include their information on the *Provider Comparison Spreadsheet* that will be provided to you by our system. From this point you will begin to do your due diligence on each provider.

To learn what others have experienced while in care with a particular provider, here are several steps you can take to research each provider.

### **State Licensing:**

As a parent searching for child care, one of the most important investigative tools available to you is your state child care licensing agency. Each state handles the compliance of their child care providers a little differently. However, generally, each state maintains a compliance file on each licensed provider. Each file commonly includes copies of compliance reviews and reports of any substantiated complaints filed against the provider/facility.

As a general rule, these files are available for public review. If you wish to review a file, you can contact your state licensing agency to find out the procedure in your specific state.

To learn more about your individual state's provider file review process, please visit our [State Child Care Licensing Agencies](#) page. There you can obtain the website address and additional contact information for your specific state's Child Care Licensing Agency.

### **Review Websites:**

Customer review websites often prove very helpful when evaluating a business you are considering doing business with. Regarding child care programs, Yelp and the many other online review sites, indeed, prove informative. You can utilize these sites to get a sense of how well managed a child care program is. To find reviews for programs you are interested in, conduct a Google search for the name of the provider with the word "reviews" included in the search box.

Remember though, review sites only give you one side of the story. In the event of a negative review, there may have been a staff, administrator, ownership [or all of the above] change since the review was written. Therefore, don't make your sole decision about a provider based on online reviews alone. Despite their usefulness, review sites cannot compare to an in-person facility tour to get the full picture of how a program operates.

## **References:**

When searching for child care, it is commonly recommended to ask for references from past and present families who have attended the program. Therefore, of course, ask for references. However, while it seems logical to check references, this request presents something of a challenge for the provider.

First, a provider is not permitted to give out client contact information without prior permission. For that reason, any references you receive will be hand-picked with prior permission granted to share their contact information.

Secondly, being on a list of references could prove to be a time burden for those references. If the providers repeatedly gives out the same few parents' contact information, those parents may be inconvenienced by spending excessive time talking to inquisitive prospective parents.

As you can see, supplying references to perspective families is problematic for providers. Another option might be to plan a late afternoon visit to the facility during pick-up time and chat with a few of the current parents while they are there retrieving their children.

Providers will handle the request for references according to their program. Thus, it is best to discuss the possibility of references with each provider.

## **Provider's Website:**

Visit the provider's website if they have one. Often you can read testimonials, see photos of the facility, read lesson plans and view calendar of events, read up on the qualifications of the staff members, learn about the provider's educational philosophy and much more. There may also be a Blog and/or past Newsletters available for you to read to learn more about the culture of the program.

## **Social Media:**

Check to see if your prospective providers have Social Media sites available to review. If the provider does not have social media links on their website, to find them, go to the search bar within the various social media sites and enter the provider/facility name. Or, Google their name with the name of the social media site in the search bar.

Facebook

Twitter

Google+

YouTube

LinkedIn

Pinterest

## **Your Community:**

And finally, ask friends, neighbors, co-workers and fellow church goers if they know anything about a provider you are considering.

At first blush, all this may seem a lot of homework to complete on each provider. Although at this stage in the process, you will probably have eliminated some of the providers on your initial list and will be working through the remaining list before you move onto touring facilities.

As you conducting your due diligence more providers will come off the list leaving your top choices for program/facility tours saving you time from touring a whole host of programs that would not meet your needs.