

Facility Tour and On-Site Interview

The time has finally come to visit the providers who have moved to the top of your list. Included in your *Provider Comparison ToolKit* is an on-site interview questionnaire worksheet for you to bring with you on your visit. The questionnaire includes an exhaustive list of 45 important questions to ask the provider while visiting the facility.

The questionnaire will help you remember the most important questions to ask on your first visit. After your appointment you will be able to consider the specific things about each provider that you will want to ask follow up questions about.

With your on-site touring in mind, here are a few guidelines to consider:

Scheduling Your Facility Tour:

For your first visit, schedule an appointment with the family care provider or center Director. It is a good idea to confirm your appointment the day before you are scheduled to tour. Child care homes and centers have very full schedules. Schedules are what keep the program running smoothly and a smooth running program is what is best for the children. Consequently, it is important avoid disrupting the planned schedule. If you cannot make your scheduled appointment call to reschedule or cancel rather than showing up late or not showing at all.

The Best Time to Tour:

Generally, the best time to schedule your first facility tour(s) is mid-morning. This is when you will have the undivided attention of the provider/director. Mid-morning will also likely enable you to observe the children participating in the planned activities and observe the classroom environment as opposed to free play or outside time.

Avoid early morning, late afternoon or mid-day during lunch/naptime to visit. These are the most demanding periods of the day for providers and having a perspective parent visiting at that time is difficult to accommodate. Subsequent visits at those times for the specific purpose of observation shouldn't be an issue with the understanding that the staff is very busy and may not be able to devote much time to answer questions or otherwise visit with you.

First Facility Tour - Parents Only:

Tour the facility by yourself or with your spouse on your first visit. In other words, don't bring your child on your first visit. By touring the facility on your own, you will be able to focus on your conversation with the provider as well as focus more attention on how well the staff is interacting with the children and how the children seem to be experiencing their time at the facility, and finally, the condition of the facility. After you have narrowed your search to 2 or 3 providers, then it is time to have your child accompany you on a facility tour of each program.

Your "Pop In" Visit(s):

Unannounced "pop in" visits are often recommended before you make your final decision. When you arrive for your "pop in" visit, let the administer know you are there but don't expect another guided tour. Plan to be a fly on the wall and focus your powers of observation

on watching how things operate in the program. Your pop-in visit can be with or without your child.

Pay attention to: Are the children engaged, happy and enjoying their time? Are the staff members interacting with them well? Does the staff appear to be enjoying their time? How is the atmosphere in the facility? A happy, energetic and positive tone or heavy with tension in the air? If there is a child or children who are upset, are they being attended to? Is the facility clean, organized well maintained and well equipped? Is there children's art decorating the classroom? In the end, you're going to lean on your gut instincts as your guide. If you like what you see and feel comfortable your child will too.

Your Child's Pre-Enrollment Visit(s):

Once you have narrowed your top candidates down to a couple of providers it is now time to bring your child for a facility tour. Your goal is to introduce your child to the facility and their would-be teacher(s). When you arrive at the facility show your child where the children's belonging go and talk to them about the mechanics of how the program works. Even very young children can understand this and it will help with the adjustment process. Depending on your child, a few visits may be in order to make the first day go more smoothly.

Enrollment Paperwork:

After you feel confident in your choice of providers, it is now time to ask for all the enrollment paperwork, pay any registration fee and arrange for your child's first day.

Congratulations! The selection process is complete. Now you can breathe a sigh of relief knowing you have chosen the very best child care option for your child. The next phase can now begin, getting plugged into your new community!