

Q: How can you recognize a quality child care program?

A: Happy children and happy staff!

More things to look for:

FACILITY

- Is the program's license displayed in a visible location?
- Are they Keystone STARS 3 or 4, or accredited in another program?

HEALTH & SAFETY

- Do bathroom and food preparation areas look and smell clean?
- Are there obvious health and safety hazards?
- Are fire extinguishers and emergency evacuation plan visible?

CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION

- Are there soft spaces for reading, relaxing and quiet games as well as spaces for active play?
- Are toys and materials developmentally appropriate and accessible, and respectful of children's culture/ethnicity?
- Is the quantity of toys and materials sufficient?
- Are the classroom furnishings child sized?
- Are staff and children's names posted in the room?

CHILD/STAFF INTERACTION

- Do the children seem occupied, happy and engaged?
- Are children allowed to make choices throughout the day?
- Are staff in ratio? (infants, 1:4; young toddlers 1:5; older toddlers 1:6; preschool 1:10)
- Does each child receive individual attention?
- Does staff seem respectful and receptive to children's needs?
- Does staff appear lively, smiling and positive?
- Does staff sit and eat family style with children to encourage learning?

OUTDOOR PLAY

- Do children have an opportunity to play outside each day?
- Is outside play equipment sturdy and in good repair?
- Are children supervised by staff at all times?
- Do toddlers play separately from the older children?
- Are outside areas for learning activities as well as free play?

DIRECTOR & STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

- Has the director completed the PA Director Credential? Is a copy of the director's degree posted visibly?
- Does staff have experience and education in early childhood development? Is the education level of staff posted?
- Does staff have current pediatric first-aid and fire safety certification?
- Is ongoing training available?

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

- Are parents welcomed in the program? Are they respected?
- Does staff communicate daily with parents about their child?
- Is an observation completed within 45 days of a child's entry in the program? Are results shared with parents, and used for individual child planning and referral to community resources?