

# Choosing Quality Child Care

## **1. Look**

Begin by visiting several child care homes or centers. On each visit, think about your first impression. But don't stop there. Does the place look safe for your child? Do the caregivers/teachers who will care for your child enjoy talking and playing with children? Do they talk with each child at the child's eye level? Are there plenty of toys and learning materials within a child's reach? You should always visit a home or center more than once. And stay as long as possible so you can get a good feel for what the care will be like for your child. Even after you start using the child care, continue to come back and check it out.

## **2. Listen**

What does the child care setting sound like? Do the children sound happy and involved? What about the teachers' voices? Do they seem cheerful and patient? A place that's too quiet may mean not enough activity. A place that's too noisy may mean there is a lack of control.

## **3. Count**

Count the number of children in the group. Then count the number of staff members caring for them. Obviously, the fewer the number of children for each adult, the more attention your child will get. A small number of children per adult is most important for babies and younger children.

## **4. Ask**

It's very important that the adults who care for children have the knowledge and experience to give them the attention they need. Ask about the background and experience of all staff: the program director, caregivers, teachers, and any other adults who will have contact with your child in the home or center. Find out about the special training each one has had and whether the program is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) or the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC). Quality care providers and teachers will be happy to have you ask these questions.

*Source: National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Association*