

Things to keep in mind when looking for child care

1. **Start as Early as Possible** – Finding the right child care for you and your child is a process. It takes time to make calls and set up visits and then to be offered an opening in a program that is a “good fit” for your family. If you can start looking 6-8 months in advance you have a good chance at finding an opening in the child care program you want. For infants and toddlers starting even earlier is advised as demand is high and supply is low.
2. **Ask Questions** – Remember it is important to be an educated consumer when examining your child care options. Once you have obtained a list of child care providers, found at www.fccimn.com/providerdirectory it's time to start the interview process. Call providers in your area to narrow down your options. Refer to the *Childcare Interview Guide* for which questions to ask. If providers are full, ask if they keep a wait list and if there is a fee to be placed on the waitlist. It is recommended if you find a program that you like to go on the waitlist. This way you may be offered a spot when an opening to occurs.
3. **What is the Parent Aware Rating?** Parent Aware rating is a system to help parents identify high quality child care programs whom participate in the Parent Aware program. To learn more about the Parent Aware Rating please visit <http://parentaware.org/>
4. **Schedule a Visit** – After you have narrowed your choices, visit several child care facilities or family child care programs. Meet with the home child care provider or center director and tour the facility. Remember, programs can vary greatly from one another, the more programs you visit, the better perspective you will have on what is best for your child and your family.
5. **Investigate** – We highly encourage you to ask for and to check references. Never leave your child in any center or home if you are told that parents are not welcome to drop in at any time, unannounced. Never leave your child anywhere without having spent some time with the prospective child care provider.
6. **Check the licensing information** – Before making a final decision or signing a contract review licensing records on the providers you are considering. Minnesota Department of Human Services provides access to these records that includes licensed capacity by age, licensing inspection history, information about past complaints or investigations and any restrictions to the license. [Click for Child Care Look Up.](#)
7. **Enroll** – Once you have chosen a program you will need to provide the enrollment paperwork and forms before your child can begin attending. The provider should walk you through this process. If you haven't already done so, arrange to take your child for a visit before you leave him or her for care. This will make for a happier first day for everyone.
8. **Stay Involved** – Once your child is enrolled in the program of your choice, it is important to stay involved. You now need to become a partner with your child's teacher or provider. Remember they are spending 9-12 hours with your child each day. Make it a habit to communicate on a regular basis. Find out how your child is doing during the day, what they are learning about and how you can continue that learning process at home. Be sure to share information about your child to help the teacher or caregiver better understand him or her.