

DAY CARE

Now That You've Found It, Keep It Going Well

Once you find a child care provider, your job is not over. It's important to monitor the care your child receives to make sure that your child is getting the care that he or she needs. A visit during the day will give you a chance to make some observations.

- How does the home or center look, sound and smell?
- Is the area clean? Does broken equipment get fixed quickly?
- Is there a sound of happy activity, rather than a lot of yelling by the provider or children?
- Does the home or center smell alright? A slight, temporary odor after an "accident" is one thing, but a persistent, bad smell may mean that there is a problem.
- Do the children seem happy?



Most important, does your child seem happy? Does he or she look forward to going to day care? Talk and listen to your child. Ask questions that can't be answered by a "yes" or "no," like "Tell me what you did today?" or "What do you like best (or least) about day care?"

Note: In a licensed day care, providers are not allowed to hit or spank children for any reason. There are alternative ways of teaching children. If your child care provider is unlicensed you should make your wishes known about spanking or hitting your child.

- Build a good relationship with your provider.
- Take time to stop and talk even if there are no problems or concerns.
- Respect her time.
- Pay on time.

Recognizing the problems with child care:

Sometimes a child is too young or too frightened to tell you about a problem. If the child cannot deal with a problem, he or she may become stressed. Some stress is normal for everyone, but too much is a sign that the child needs help. If there are any changes in your child's behavior that last more than a few days, discuss them with the care provider. He or she may have some ideas about what might be going on.

Signs of stress in your child care provider:

Your provider may also show signs of stress. Too much stress may cause her to hurt or neglect your child, or to give less than the best care. Possible signs of stress:

- Labels the child as "bad" or "difficult."
- Is not concerned about the child's well being and doesn't seem to be paying attention to him or her
- Gives conflicting stories about how your child gets hurt
- Uses punishment such as hitting, spanking or yelling
- Becomes angry when you ask about your child



What to do if you have problems

- If you think the problem with your child's behavior is in his day care, tell your provider about your concerns. Assume that she is doing the best she can and see if you can work together to solve the problem.
- Ask questions that allow your child to tell you his or her concerns. "Open-ended" questions, or those which cannot be answered with yes or no, can let your child tell you more.
- Keep a daily log noting any injuries or anything unusual.

Danger signals

These problems should always be checked out. If your provider does not have a reasonable explanation, you may wish to contact your local child protective services agency, which is part of your local department of social services.

- Unexplained bruises or injuries
- Continued minor injuries
- Fear of the day care provider
- Torn or bloodstained underwear
- Panic, fear or terrified crying every time the parent leaves
- Persons other than your provider or staff in the home or center on a regular basis