

Checklist for Choosing Out of School Time Care For School Age Children

Partial Excerpt from the Child Care Aware Brochure, “Selecting a Quality After-school Program for Your Child”

A Quality After-school Program is Important Because:

Children are likely to spend as many hours in their out-of-school-time program as in school.

Quality programs help your child grow socially, emotionally, and physically.

Good staff to child ratios allow for individual attention and help children build strong relationships with caring adults.

Children in quality after-school programs are less likely to smoke, drink alcohol, and use drugs.

You will be more productive at work when you know your children are safe after school, during school vacations, and in the summer.

How do I select a quality program for my child?

Begin by reflecting on what you did after-school and in the summer as a school age child.

Think about your child and the type of program that would best serve your child and family. Then look for programs that can meet the needs of your child.

Start your search by asking friends, family members, and school personnel for recommendations.

Contact your local Resource and Referral agency. They can provide all kinds of useful information to help guide you in your search for quality programs.

Look for programs in your area that are dedicated to continuous improvement and are working toward accreditation.

Once you receive several referrals you may want to narrow your search by telephoning a number of programs and asking about availability, hours, and fees. Ask if they are open on school vacation days and in the summer.

After you have narrowed your list to a few options, make appointments to visit the programs and interview the staff.

During your visit, remember to look, listen, and ask questions.

Look at the staff and children.

Are they happy to be at the program?

Do the children seem engaged in their activities?

Are staff involved with the children?

Is the space safe and clean?

Are snack menus healthy and plentiful?

Listen to the sounds of the program.

So you hear laughter and lively conversation?

Do you hear staff engaged in conversation with the children and youth?

Ask questions of the staff and the children and youth. Ask about staff training and development. Are all staff trained in CPR/First Aid?

Is there ongoing training available to the staff?

Is the program aware of national quality standards?

Is there a parent board or council?

Are children involved in planning program activities?