



## CHOOSING A DAY CARE

### ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT PARENTING DECISIONS YOU CAN MAKE

Choosing a child care program means more than selecting a safe and nurturing environment that works with your family's needs and schedule. A quality program can also play an important role in your child's social, emotional and brain development. As the latest science shows us, early experiences literally shape how the brain gets built. When babies, children and youth are given a strong foundation, the benefits are life-long.

Priceless Moments Inc is dedicated to helping all children build the strong foundation for healthy and productive lives that is essential for the commonwealth's future economic prosperity. By partnering with the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care, educators and helping parents become informed consumers; we are working to go beyond the standards for licensure to take our community-wide understanding of quality to the next level. Quality early education and care and out of school time programs are key to fostering the next generation of citizens.

A "quality program is defined as one that is aligned with the developmental needs of all children. In the past decade or so, scientists and practitioners have been drawing on vast amounts of research to define the key components of quality. As a parent, you can utilize this knowledge to find the program that best nurtures and supports your child's social, emotional and brain development.

**The components of quality at our center is as follow:**

- Curriculum, Assessment and Diversity
- Safe, Healthy Indoor and Outdoor Environments
- Workforce Qualifications and Professional Development
- Family and Community Engagement
- Leadership, Management and Administration

*What does an Early Education Care Center License means?*

- ✓ Programs must be healthy safe and offer activities that help your child develop and grow.
- ✓ Providers have training in first aid and are CPR certified.
- ✓ Providers have specialized training in child development and curriculum implementation.
- ✓ Programs must maintain appropriate ratios of teachers to children.
- ✓ All employees are required to undergo a criminal background check.

## Type of Center and School-Based Programs

### INFANTS

Birth up to 15 months

### TODDLER

At least 15 months but younger than two years and nine months

### PRESCHOOL

At least two years and nine months up to kindergarten



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What should you look for in a day care?

### **How many children are there for each staff member?**

- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a ratio of one staff person for 3 to 5 small children and one staff member for 7 to 10 older children

### **Are the younger and older children separated?**

- Separating the older and younger children helps reduce infections.

### **What are the center's policies on discipline and other important policies?**

- Are the policies in Writing.. ask for a copy

### **How are sick children cared for?**

- How is medicine given?
- How are parents told about illness among the children?
- When must children stay home because of illness?
- Does the center have a "secluded area" for children with minor illnesses?
- Is there a nurse or doctor to help with medical care?
- Are children required to have vaccinations before coming to day care?
- Is a physical exam required before admission?
- Does the day care center keep a record of health-related problems, such as illnesses, injuries and accidents, for each child?

### **What are the staff qualifications?**

- What are the training requirements for staff members?
- Are all staff members certified in basic first aid & Child Development?
- Are all staff members trained in identification of abused children?
- Are all staff members trained in preventing illness and injury?
- Does the center have rules about careful and frequent hand-washing?.

### **Center & Playground Safety**

- Are poison control phone numbers and ambulance phone numbers clearly posted?
- Does the playground have impact-absorbing surfaces, such as wood chips, under the swings and slides?
- Are the children protected from strangers?
- Are fire drills held at least every month?
- Are there smoke alarms throughout the building?
- Are safety gates used in areas for small children?
- Are electric outlets covered?
- Are sharp corners of furniture covered?
- Are the toys kept clean daily?.
- Does the day-care staff regularly clean all surfaces with disinfectant?

### **What Can Parents Do to Keep Centers Safe for Their Children?**

- Visit with the staff at the day-care center.
- Go to meetings for family members.
- Suggest educational programs for parents and staff members.
- Help with cleaning and repairs at the day-care center. Volunteer.
- Ask your child every day about what happened at day care.

### **Signs of Problems**

- The staff fails to answer your questions and address your concerns.
- There is no way for parents to be involved in the day-care practices.
- Your child tells you about problems or is not happy with his or her day care.
- Unexplained accidents happen more than once.
- The staff changes often.
- The management can't offer you a written copy of the day-care policies.
- Other parents tell you about problems or concerns with the day-care center.
- References.