

Preschool Checklist

Keep the following statements in mind when you are looking for a preschool program, along with the advantages and disadvantages found in the First Steps booklet. You can discuss with the provider some of these statements directly; you will get answers to many of them just by observing the program. Add any questions or concerns you may have to this list.

About the Provider

- The provider helps children develop independence, yet assists when needed.
- The provider allows preschoolers to exercise newly-developed skills, while being patient with accidents or setbacks.
- The provider respects each child's individuality with respect to learning styles, emotional expression, creativity, etc.
- The provider allows for both individual and group playtime.
- The provider consistently praises appropriate behaviors.
- The provider encourages social skills by teaching and modeling appropriate interaction.
- The provider takes time to give parents regular feedback on the child's progress and daily activities.
- The provider allows for the safe expression of curiosity.
- The provider allows quiet time as an alternative if the child does not sleep during naptime.

About the Curriculum

- Activities are designed to develop children's self-esteem and promote positive feelings toward learning.
- The materials and activities are meaningful to the child in the context of the child's experience and development.
- The children have daily opportunities for artistic expression through various forms of art and music.
- Materials and enough time is available for creative and dramatic play.
- The toys are safe, age appropriate, and interesting to your child. They reflect diverse population (i.e., gender, race, ethnicity, and disabilities).
- Lesson plans include weekly or monthly themes that focus on a special area of interest (i.e., seasons, animals, nutrition, cultures, etc.).

- Clear, consistent, simple rules are listed in a positive format (i.e., "Do..." rather than "Don't..."). The provider sets a good example by modeling and encouraging expected behavior.
- The provider speaks to each child individually.
- The provider encourages language development by speaking clearly. The provider offers experiences to extend language abilities such as reading stories, circle time, music, etc.
- Children have outdoor play time regularly to develop large motor skills, learn about outdoor environments, and express themselves freely and loudly.
- Field trips and special events are planned periodically. Permission slips are given to parents to sign.

Continued

Preschool Checklist (continued)

About the Environment

- A number of books are available for the children. The children are encouraged to look at books during free time. The books are rotated periodically.
- The sleeping area is roomy and free of distractions. Each child has his or her own individual cot or bed, elevated from the floor.
- The bathroom is cleaned and sanitized daily. It is safe and appropriate for a young child's use. Soap is provided at the children's level or available for every hand washing.

- Toilet-training equipment is available for children learning to use the bathroom independently. The bathroom routine is consistent with what your child is used to.
- The outdoor equipment is safe and age-appropriate for your preschooler.

Other Topics to Discuss

- The program has a low ratio of children to staff. See the First Steps brochure for examples.
- The provider has worked in a child care program for at least one year.
- The provider has a back-up plan in place when he/she is sick or is on planned vacation.