

Special Needs Child Care Checklist

Keep the following statements in mind when you are looking for a program for your child with special needs, along with the advantages and disadvantages found in the First Steps booklet. The Americans with Disabilities Act stipulates that all children have access to child care programs. The following statements are to assist in finding the best care for your child. 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.

Determining Your Needs

- Determine your child's physical, emotional, and/or social needs
- Determine if your child has any special health needs which may be difficult to meet in a large group setting.
- Determine if the provider needs to be located near other special services or programs.
- Determine if you, the provider, or the child's program/school need to provide transportation.
- Determine if you want a provider who is trained in working with a specific disability.
- Determine if you would be willing to work with someone who is interested in learning more about your child.

Topics for the Provider

- Learn about the daily activities provided to the children.
- Learn the flexibility of the daily schedule.
- The provider is willing to make reasonable adjustments to the schedule and/or environment to meet the needs of your child.
- The provider has cared for children with special needs in the past.
- Learn the training/qualifications the provider has to care for children with special needs.
- The provider is trained in CPR and First Aid.
- The provider is able to spend time with you or others to learn techniques to better serve your child. She/he is willing to learn to administer medication if required.
- The provider has references available upon request.

Things to Look for When Visiting the Program

Emotional Environment

- Observe the ways the provider communicates with the parents.
 - Daily logs are kept.
 - The provider greets parents when arriving in the morning and/or evening.
 - Conferences are scheduled.
 - The parents seem comfortable discussing issues concerning their child with the provider.
- The staff is gentle and patient with a child who is having trouble.
- Children are encouraged to find solutions to their problems.
- The children and adults help each other with tasks.

Continued

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Things to Look for When Visiting the Program

Emotional Environment (continued)

- The provider helps the children find ways to interact with each other.
- The children are encouraged to learn daily tasks such as dressing and using the bathroom.

Physical Environment

- Determine if there is a clear path to safety exits for wheelchairs or walkers.
- The physical environment is welcoming to your child.
 - The toys are within the children’s reach.
 - The furniture and activity centers are appropriate in size and height.

- The sitting and sleeping areas are appropriate and comfortable for your child.
- The bathrooms are accessible.
- The staff can see the children at all times.
- Books, pictures, toys, and dolls that reflect a diverse population (i.e., gender, race, ethnicity, and disabilities) are offered.

Getting Off to a Good Start

- Tell the provider the things your child can do.
- Give the provider written instructions on your child’s daily routine.
- Let the provider know how your child communicates needs or wants, including verbal and non-verbal signs or signals.

- Let the provider know about special dietary restrictions, equipment, medicines, and activities your child may need.
- Show children (and the provider) how things operate to prevent accidents and damage to equipment.
- Keep communication open. You are the best resource for your child care provider.