Choosing the right type of child care is often difficult. This brochure is designed to assist you in selecting child care arrangements to suit your family's situation as well as your child’s needs. The checklist is a partial list of things you should find in a child care setting where quality is important.

**CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING WHEN CHOOSING CHILD CARE:**

**When do I need child care?**
Plan ahead and give yourself time to visit several child care programs before making a decision.

**What is the cost of care and the payment schedule?**
Child care costs may vary, depending on the type of care you choose, the days and hours you need care and the area in which you live. Fees may be more for infants and toddlers. There may be discounts if a family has more than one child enrolled in care.

**What is included in the cost of care?**
There may be registration fees, transportation fees, field trip and activity fees. Parents may or may not be required to furnish infant formula, baby food and diapers for infants or toddlers.

**WHAT ARE MY CHILD CARE CHOICES?**

**Child Care Centers**
Centers care for thirteen or more children and legally operate in one of two ways: licensed or exempt (Church sponsored centers are exempt, but may choose to be licensed).

**Family Day Care Homes**
One caregiver cares for no more than six unrelated children in the caregiver’s home and must be licensed.

**Group Day Care Homes**
Two or more caregivers care for no more than twelve children and must be licensed.

In Alabama, child care programs which operate less than four hours a day are not regulated by the Department of Human Resources.

If you feel your family’s income is low enough to qualify for financial child care assistance, contact your local Child Care Management Agency (CMA) for more information.

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**WHAT SHOULD I LOOK FOR?**

When visiting a day care facility, use the following checklist to help you decide whether it is a quality program which will suit the needs of your child and your family. After an initial visit by appointment, try to make an announced visit before enrolling your child.

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<th>Facilities Visited</th>
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1. Does the facility have a visible current license, if required?
2. Are there enough caregivers to give proper attention to all children at all times?
3. Is the caregiver friendly and eager to care for children?
4. Does the facility have enough equipment for all children?
5. Does the facility provide a variety of activities to help children develop intellectually, emotionally, and socially?
6. Do the children in care seem happy and content?
7. Do the discipline and child rearing philosophies agree with yours?
8. Are there emergency procedures and routine fire drills?
9. Are nutritious meals and snacks served?
10. Are parents welcome to visit during hours of operation?
11. Are parents provided with written operating policies which include a payment schedule?
12. Are persons caring for children trained in child care and development?
13. Does the caregiver participate in ongoing child care and development training?
14. Does the caregiver/program furnish references?
15. Does the facility have a working telephone?
16. Is the facility clean, uncluttered, and free of hazards?
17. Does the facility have child-sized and/or adapted furniture and bathroom facilities?
18. Does the facility operate during hours which will fit your work schedule?
19. Is parent participation/involvement part of the program?
20. Does the facility have a safe outdoor play area?
WHAT IS “Licensed” CHILD CARE?

Being licensed means that child care centers, family and group day care homes have been inspected to determine whether minimum standards are met as required by the State Department of Human Resources. Some facilities are also inspected by the State Department of Public Health and the State Fire Marshal’s Office. All programs that require a license must have the license renewed every two years. The Department of Human Resources prescribes and enforces minimum standards for licensing approval.

Copies of minimum standards used to license day care facilities may be obtained by contacting the State Department of Human Resources. Minimum standards for licensure include, but are not limited to:

- Child/staff ratios based on ages of children and types of activities
- Safety requirements for facility and equipment
- Records on children and staff, including immunization and health records
- Minimum educational or training requirements for staff
- Nutritional requirements for children
- Transportation requirements
- Requirements for basic program operations
- Disciplinary procedures

WHAT IS “Quality” CHILD CARE?

Quality child care involves attitudes and activities which promote social, emotional, intellectual and physical growth and well-being of every child. Other factors contribute to quality such as:

- Low child/staff ratios
- Trained staff
- Safe and healthy environment
- Developmentally appropriate activities and practices

PARENT PARTICIPATION

It is the responsibility of parents to be actively involved in their child’s day care. Partnerships should be developed with caregivers.

WHO CAN HELP ME FIND CHILD CARE?

If you need help in locating licensed child care or need more information regarding child care, you may contact an area Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, your County Department of Human Resources, or the State Department of Human Resources, 50 Ripley Street, Montgomery, Alabama 36104, (334) 242-1425 or toll free at 1-866-528-1694.

You may also find information about child care on the Department of Human Resources web site at www.dhr.alabama.gov. Go to Services, then Child Care.

WHAT ABOUT COMPLAINTS?

Serious complaints involving child care centers that cannot be satisfactorily resolved between the parent and the caregiver should be reported to the Office of Child Care Licensing Intake at (334) 242-1425 or toll free at 1-866-528-1694. Complaints involving day care/nighttime homes in Jefferson County should also be reported to this number. Complaints involving family and group day care/nighttime homes should be reported to your local County Department of Human Resources, in all counties except Jefferson.

All programs of the Department of Human Resources are administered in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and all other federal and state civil rights laws.

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