

Childcare Options

Overview

In the past, it was common for mothers to stay at home with their children. But today, more and more families find it financially necessary for both parents to return to work a short period of time after the baby's birth. The responsibility of caring for your baby is now in the hands of someone else.

Ask yourself two important questions before you decide on a childcare provider:

- Does he or she enjoy children? Babies need a lot of attention.
- Will they be available in the months to come? Babies need to form close bonds with people and can suffer if they have too many caregivers.

Although many qualified childcare providers are available, below is a list of things to look for when choosing a childcare provider.

- Does the caregiver have the same basic beliefs about raising children as you do?
- Does the caregiver have training to understand what children can and want to do at different stages of growth?
- Does the caregiver spend time holding, playing with and talking to your baby?
- Does the caregiver have enough time to look after all the children in his or her care?
- Does the caregiver have a license?
- Has the caregiver been trained in CPR, first aid and car seat safety?
- Does the caregiver know about safe sleep practices?
- Does the caregiver know about safe breast milk storage and handling? Or safe formula preparation?
- Does the home or center have a clean comfortable look?
- Are the children in this setting exposed to cigarette smoke or pets?

Talk to parents who use childcare. Interview possible caregivers and check references before making a decision.

A listing of licensed childcare providers is available through your county social services agency.

- Benton (320) 968-5087
- Sherburne (800) 433-5239
- Stearns (320) 656-6000
- Todd (320) 732-4500
- Others call 411 to ask for (your county) public health or (your county) health and human services number

Parent Aware provides a resource and referral service for those looking for childcare in Minnesota <http://parentaware.org> or (888) 291-9811

Northeast District Child Care Resources & Referral serves the Long Prairie area: (800) 890-5399.

Learn as much as you can about your childcare provider. A childcare provider can be licensed or legally unlicensed.

Licensed childcare

Licensed childcare means an outside agency conducts a background check on the provider and a safety check on the childcare site.

The childcare can be family-base or center-based. A family-based program can have no more than five to 15 children at one time. The number of children is based on the type of license, the ages of the children, the number of adults present and the size of the center.

Legally unlicensed childcare

Legally unlicensed childcare means no one provides a background on the provider or the safety of the childcare site. The site could be in a home or school. The site must meet these criteria:

- Any number of related children.
- Only one unrelated family. Any number of children in that unrelated family.