

Choosing an Early Care Program Checklist

How do you determine which program is best for you and your family? Bringing this checklist along when visiting programs may help you. We also encourage families to ask child care programs whether they have earned or are working toward national accreditation or BrightStars Quality Rating.

★ A Healthy and Safe Environment

- Are the indoor and outdoor spaces for children safe and free of hazards?
- Are children supervised at all times, even when they are napping?
- Do adults and children wash their hands before eating or handling food and after using the bathroom?
- Are there procedures for handling emergencies?

★ A Stimulating Environment and Opportunities to Practice Emerging Skills

- Are adults warm and welcoming? Do they engage in conversation with the children throughout the day?
- Is the space organized and are children able to reach and use many different type of materials and toys?
- Do the adults read to the children daily or encourage them to read, if age appropriate?
- Do children have frequent opportunities for active play both indoors and outdoors?

★ Low Child to Adult Ratios and Small Group Sizes

- Does the number of children in a group meet Rhode Island licensing standards? (See the *Family's Guide to Getting Started*)

★ Welcomes and Includes Families

- Does the program welcome families any time the children are in care?
- Will the program regularly provide you with information about your child's activities and development?
- Do families have input in program decision making?

★ Trained and Qualified Staff

- Does the director/provider have a degree in early childhood education or related field?
- Do teachers or providers have any formal education in early childhood? (Ex. Child Development Associate, RI Early Childhood Teaching Certificate, college credits in early childhood education, degree in early childhood or related)