Choosing Child Care for My Child with Special Needs - Parent Visit Log
Revised January 2008

This guide was developed by
Child and Family Studies Research Programs,

Philadelphia Inclusion Network
to assist families of
children with special needs choose an
appropriate child care setting for their child.

Some of the information included was modified from the
National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)

Parents are encouraged to use this guide
in addition to other guidelines such as those provided,
by their State for example,
the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare
Child Care Works toll-free helpline at 1-877-4-PA KIDS.

If you would like assistance using
this guide please contact the

Philadelphia Inclusion Network
215-503-1608
cfsrp@jefferson.edu
The **INITIAL STEP** in making decisions regarding child care is to identify the needs of you and your child. Things to think about and decide:

What amount of care do you need or want? (hours/week/ or day)

When do you need the care? (days/evening/weekends)

How much can you afford to pay? (per week/month)

What things are important to you? (location, program approach or style, curriculum, other parents’ perspectives, etc.)
**BEFORE your visit:**

Call the program. Here are sample questions you can ask:

*Is there space available for my child who is age ___?*
*If not, what is the length of the waiting list?*
*What hours and days are you open?*
*Are you open year round?*
*How much does the care cost?*
*When can I visit the program?*
  
  *Schedule a time and day to visit.*

You can record the answers for up to three programs on the next two pages.

**WHEN you visit**

Pages 5 - 18 are set up with questions you can ask and space to record information for up to three visits.

**AFTER you visit**

Discuss your thoughts and reactions with family members or friends. If your child is currently receiving early intervention or other type of therapy services you may want to discuss your visits with your child’s therapist, social worker or special education teacher.
Before your visit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>Name of Program and Phone #</th>
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<tr>
<td>Is there space available for my child who is age ___?</td>
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<td>Ask yourself: Do I want to visit this program?</td>
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# Choosing Child Care for My Child with Special Needs

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Choosing Child Care for My Child with Special Needs

FIRST Program Visited
Name of Program ________________  Director’s Name ____________
Date of Visit ________________  Time of Visit ____________

Questions to ask DURING the visit

May I have a copy of your parent handbook?
What to look for: The mission includes statements related to welcoming all children; meeting children’s individual needs; respecting and honoring diversity; appreciation for individual learning styles; etc.

What do children spend most of their time doing?
What to look for: You want to see children spending most of their time playing and working with materials or other children and not being directed by the teacher. The classroom is decorated with children’s original artwork, their own writing with invented spelling, and stories dictated by children to teachers.

What types of activities do the children do throughout the day?
What to look for: Assorted building blocks and other construction materials, props for pretend play, picture books, paints and other art materials, and table toys such as matching games, pegboards, and puzzles. Children should not all be doing the same thing at the same time. Children have an opportunity to play outside every day – in addition to talking walks.

How many children are together throughout the day - do they stay all in one group in the classroom?
What to look for: Teachers working with individual children, small groups, and the whole group at different times during the day. They should not spend all their time with the whole group. For example, teachers read books to children individually or in small groups throughout the day, not just at group story time.

Can you tell me how things like colors, numbers, and letters are taught to the children?
What to look for: Children learning numbers and the alphabet in the context of their everyday experiences. The natural world of plants and animals and meaningful activities like cooking, taking attendance, or serving snack provide the basis for learning activities. Worksheets are used little if at all.

How do the teachers meet individual children’s learning needs or match their learning style?
What to listen for: The curriculum is adapted for those who are ahead as well as those who need additional help. Teachers recognize that children’s different background and experiences mean that they do not learn the same things at the same time in the same way. For example, teachers shorten or lengthen the time of an activity; can include movement in an activity that otherwise would be done sitting down – like make your body into the shape of a letter or having children find “something blue” in the classroom rather than just using a blue crayon.

How can I speak to some of the parents of children in the classroom?
What to listen for: Children and their parents look forward to school. Parents feel secure about sending their child to the program. Children are happy to attend; they do not cry regularly or complain of feeling sick.

Can parents drop into a classroom at anytime?

Can I set up a “trial day” when my child can join in activities while I observe?

How are parents involved in the program?
## NOTES:

- **parent handbook**
- **children spend time**
- **types of activities**
- **children are together**
- **taught to the children**
- **individual children's learning**
- **parents of children**
- **parents drop in**
- **“trial day”**
- **parents involved**
Let's Review the first visit:

___ My “gut” feeling about the program is positive

The Program

___ is licensed or registered
___ is participating in a State quality rating system
   (like AAA rating of restaurants and hotels)
___ has a positive and stimulating atmosphere
___ encourages positive social development and good social skills
___ individualizes for all children, rather than all children doing the
   same thing at the same time all the time

___ There is plenty of indoor space and materials for my child to play and
   explore
___ There is also outdoor space for play
___ My child’s health and safety will be protected
___ Staff-to-child ratios are appropriate for my child’s age
___ Parent participation seems to be encouraged

The Staff

___ seemed to have a positive view of children
___ are qualified and ongoing professional development is provided
___ appear to enjoy being with the children
___ have experience working with other children with special needs
___ were receptive to me and to my child when we visited
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SECOND Program Visited

Name of Program _______________  Director’s Name ____________
Date of Visit ________________  Time of Visit ____________

Questions to ask DURING the visit

May I have a copy of your parent handbook?
What to look for: The mission includes statements related to welcoming all children; meeting children’s individual needs; respecting and honoring diversity; appreciation for individual learning styles; etc.

What do children spend most of their time doing?
What to look for: You want to see children spending most of their time playing and working with materials or other children and not being directed by the teacher. The classroom is decorated with children’s original artwork, their own writing with invented spelling, and stories dictated by children to teachers.

What types of activities do the children do throughout the day?
What to look for: Assorted building blocks and other construction materials, props for pretend play, picture books, paints and other art materials, and table toys such as matching games, pegboards, and puzzles. Children should not all be doing the same thing at the same time. Children have an opportunity to play outside every day – in addition to talking walks.

How many children are together throughout the day – do they stay all in one group in the classroom?
What to look for: Teachers working with individual children, small groups, and the whole group at different times during the day. They should not spend all their time with the whole group. For example, teachers read books to children individually or in small groups throughout the day, not just at group story time.

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What to listen for: Children learning numbers and the alphabet in the context of their everyday experiences. The natural world of plants and animals and meaningful activities like cooking, taking attendance, or serving snack provide the basis for learning activities. Worksheets are used little if at all.

How do the teachers meet individual children’s learning needs or match their learning style?
What to listen for: The curriculum is adapted for those who are ahead as well as those who need additional help. Teachers recognize that children’s different background and experiences mean that they do not learn the same things at the same time in the same way. For example, teachers shorten or lengthen the time of an activity; can include movement in an activity that otherwise would be done sitting down – like make your body into the shape of a letter or having children find “something blue” in the classroom rather than just using a blue crayon.

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Can I set up a “trial day” when my child can join in activities while I observe?

How are parents involved in the program?
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Let's Review the second visit:

____ My "gut" feeling about the program is positive

The Program
____ is licensed or registered
____ is participating in a State quality rating system
   (like AAA rating of restaurants and hotels)
____ has a positive and stimulating atmosphere
____ encourages positive social development and good social skills
____ individualizes for all children, rather than all children doing the
   same thing at the same time all the time

____ There is plenty of indoor space and materials for my child to play and
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____ There is also outdoor space for play
____ My child’s health and safety will be protected
____ Staff-to-child ratios are appropriate for my child’s age
____ Parent participation seems to be encouraged

The Staff
____ seemed to have a positive view of children
____ are qualified and ongoing professional development is provided
____ appear to enjoy being with the children
____ have experience working with other children with special needs
____ were receptive to me and to my child when we visited
### NOTES:

- Can I have a copy of your parent handbook?
- What hours and days are you open and where are you located?
- How much does the care cost? Is there financial assistance available?
- What are the late fees?
- Is there a reduced fee if my child is out sick?
THIRD Program Visited
Name of Program __________________________ Director’s Name __________
Date of Visit __________________________ Time of Visit __________

Questions to ask DURING the visit

May I have a copy of your parent handbook?
What to look for: The mission includes statements related to welcoming all children; meeting children’s individual needs; respecting and honoring diversity; appreciation for individual learning styles; etc.

What do children spend most of their time doing?
What to look for: You want to see children spending most of their time playing and working with materials or other children and not being directed by the teacher. The classroom is decorated with children’s original artwork, their own writing with invented spelling, and stories dictated by children to teachers.

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How are parents involved in the program?
### NOTES:

- parent handbook
- children spend time
- types of activities
- children are together
- taught to the children
- individual children's learning
- parents of children
- parents drop in
- "trial day"
- parents involved
Let's Review the third visit:

_____ My "gut" feeling about the program is positive

The Program
_____ is licensed or registered
_____ is participating in a State quality rating system
   (like AAA rating of restaurants and hotels)
_____ has a positive and stimulating atmosphere
_____ encourages positive social development and good social skills
_____ individualizes for all children, rather than all children doing the
   same thing at the same time all the time

_____ There is plenty of indoor space and materials for my child to play and
   explore
_____ There is also outdoor space for play
_____ My child's health and safety will be protected
_____ Staff-to-child ratios are appropriate for my child's age
_____ Parent participation seems to be encouraged

The Staff
_____ seemed to have a positive view of children
_____ are qualified and ongoing professional development is provided
_____ appear to enjoy being with the children
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