

PARENTING

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Choosing the right day care provider

TRESA ERICKSON
Special to The IFP

Congratulations. You just found out you're pregnant. Nine months from now, you and your husband will be parents for the first time. While you would love to stay at home with your child, you don't think that's going to be financially feasible, so you're going to have to find a day care provider. Where do you start?

First, you need to know what day care options are available. There are four basic types:

- One-on-one day care. In this setting, one person, often a relative or nanny, cares for a child or group of siblings.
- Family day care. In this setting, one person, often a friend, neighbor or relative, cares for a small group of children in their home.
- Group day care centers. In this setting, several licensed professionals care for a large number of children, often providing hands-on learning activities.
- Cooperatives. In this setting, several sets of parents get together and take turns watching each other's children or they go in together and hire someone to watch over their children as a group.

Once you've decided on a type of day care for your child, you should start looking for a provider. Ask friends and family for recommendations. Schedule a meeting with the providers you find and ask the following:

- How long has the provider been caring for children?
- How many children do they care for?
- Is the provider licensed? Are they trained in first aid and C.P.R.?
- How much does the provider charge per week? How do they handle holidays? Do they charge extra if you are running late?
- How does the provider handle discipline problems?
- What kind of activities do they provide for the children they care for?

These are just some of the questions you should ask potential providers. As a concerned parent, you will probably have more. Write down your questions and don't hesitate to give your list to the provider. You should also take a tour of the home or facility where the provider works and make sure it's safe and clean. In addition, you should arrange a time when you can bring along your child and see how well the provider interacts with them.



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