

# WHAT IS QUALITY?

**A**lthough parents differ in their definition of quality child care, look for these key items:

- The caregiver enjoys and respects children, encouraging verbal development. Positive guidance techniques, or discipline, are used. The sound of the environment is cheerful and pleasant rather than overly noisy or forced quiet. Caregivers are involved with and accessible to the children.
- Caregivers understand the way children learn. Children are allowed to choose from several activities the caregiver has planned or create their own. The daily schedule includes indoor and outdoor play, quiet and active time, and individual and group activities.
- Parents are well-informed. Parents are told each day about what their child is doing. Policies are explained to new parents. Parents are encouraged to visit for lunch, share a special skill or drop in unannounced at any time.
- There are enough caregivers to care for children's needs. Substitutes are called when needed. Caregivers participate in training opportunities.
- Ample indoor and outdoor space is available. The environment is safe, clean, comfortable and attractive. Toys and other materials are placed where children can freely use them.
- Health and safety are observed. Caregiver and children wash hands after diapering and toileting and before meals. Caregivers have first aid and CPR training. Children are supervised at all times. Records are kept on health evaluations for children and caregiver(s). Children are current on their immunizations.
- Nutritional meals are provided. Parents have access to accurate menus. Children are encouraged to serve and feed themselves. The caregiver sits with the children during meals and encourages conversation. Bottles are not propped. Food is not used as a punishment or reward.
- Small group size allowing caregivers one on one time with each child.

# CHOOSING CARE FOR YOUR CHILD

**F**irst, determine what your needs are, as well as your child's individual needs.

- The days and hours you need care
- The preferred location—near home or work or other
- Any special needs your child may have
- What you can afford to pay

**S**econd, make a lot of phone calls

- Have a list of questions you want to ask.
- Set up time for visits.

**T**hird, visit a number of homes and/or centers.

The best time to observe is usually in the mid-morning; spend at least 30 minutes to an hour. Some parents choose to bring their child on the visits to participate in activities as much as they are willing. Act naturally, but don't get so involved that you can't see how the program operates when you aren't around. Use the checklist located in the center of this brochure to record only those items you actually observed. Then ask the caregiver or director any questions you may have. When you have narrowed your choices down to one or two, you may want to visit again at a different time of day, such as late afternoon, to learn more about the program.

**F**ourth, check with the Texas Department of Protective & Regulatory Services, TDPRS, to see if there have been any validated concerns about the day home/caregiver before enrolling your child.

Read the record on the day home or center. State law requires that caregivers report any suspected incidents of child abuse to the proper authorities. Parents are encouraged to report both suspected child abuse and/or any caregivers not adhering to Texas minimum standards. Pay attention to your instincts about the caregiver and program. If you are uncomfortable, your child probably will be, too!

# WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS?

**A**ccredited Child Care

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) has a voluntary accreditation system for centers. The center must go through an extensive self-study process, be evaluated and must meet NAEYC standards of quality before becoming accredited. Family homes are accredited by the National Association of Family Child Care (NAFCC)

**T**exas Rising Star Provider

The Texas Workforce Commission certifies child care providers as Texas Rising Star Providers through the Child Care Services (CCS) Program. To be eligible for this voluntary program the provider must be a CCS provider and meet specific criteria that exceed minimum standards.

**L**icensed Child Care Centers

Child care centers are required by law to be licensed by TDPRS based on state minimum standards. The number of children per staff member and the group size is based on the age of the children in each group.

**L**icensed Group Homes

Group homes are required to be licensed by TDPRS based on state minimum standards. A group home is licensed to care for seven to twelve children under 14 years of age. There is usually one caregiver and an assistant.

**R**egistered Family Homes

Providers that care for more than three children (besides their own) in their home must register with TDPRS. Registered home providers may care for no more than six children under age 14, plus no more than six additional school age children.

**L**isted Family Homes

People who are paid to provide regular child care in their homes for 1 to 3 children who are not related to them must list with the TDPRS.

# EARLY ON

**K**indergarten Readiness Guidelines

- Supports economic development by preparing the workforce of tomorrow for school success
- Strengthens parent's role as their child's first teacher
- Promotes development of communication, problem solving and life skills
- Early childhood providers and elementary school staff communicate on school readiness issues and transition to elementary school
- Neighborhoods support family strengthening and early childhood education
- Elementary school students experience academic, emotional and social success
- 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students pass TAKS (Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills)

To request a copy of the Kindergarten Readiness Guidelines, call **1-800-332-3264**



# CHILD CARE CHECKLIST

Yes	No	Basic information
_____	_____	The hours are suitable.
_____	_____	I can afford the fees.
_____	_____	Meals and snacks are appropriate.
_____	_____	Transportation is available.
_____	_____	The group size and age grouping are acceptable.
_____	_____	Center license or home registration is posted.
Yes	No	The caregivers
_____	_____	The caregivers have good training and experience with children.
_____	_____	Caregivers have been in the program for at least one year.
_____	_____	Disciplinary methods are acceptable to me.
_____	_____	Caregivers are friendly and cooperative.
_____	_____	Caregivers are responsible and supportive.
_____	_____	Children are treated as individuals. (If day home) the caregiver is committed for at least one year.
Yes	No	The place
_____	_____	The setting is bright and cheerful.
_____	_____	Children seem happy. Staff members and children get along well.
_____	_____	There is a balanced daily schedule.
_____	_____	Children can take part in activities appropriate to their age.
_____	_____	Children are comforted when needed.
_____	_____	The place is clean and orderly.
_____	_____	Safety rules are identified.

_____	_____	Different areas are available for quiet play, active play and outdoor play.
_____	_____	There is enough space for all activities.
_____	_____	There are enough books, paints, blocks, musical toys, games, and puzzles, etc.
_____	_____	Children can get things for themselves.
_____	_____	The playground area is fenced and hazard-free.
_____	_____	There are smoke detectors and fire extinguishers in evidence.
Yes	No	Parental involvement
_____	_____	Parents are involved in decision making.
_____	_____	Menus are posted.
_____	_____	Parents participate in some activities.
_____	_____	Policies are clear.
Yes	No	Overall impression
_____	_____	References are provided.
_____	_____	People who have used this service speak well of it.
_____	_____	I would be happy here if I were a child.
_____	_____	I feel comfortable leaving my child here.



# RESOURCES YOU CAN USE

## Concho Valley Child Care Services (CCS)

Contracted with the Concho Valley Workforce Development Board, Affiliated Computer Services State & Local Solutions, Inc. assists qualified parents who are striving to become self-sufficient. CCS provides families with choices in child care arrangements, helping them find qualified caregivers, and assists in paying for care. CCS is located in the Texas Workforce Center, 202 Henry O. Flipper St, San Angelo, TX 76903; (915) 653-2321 or toll free 1-800-9-WORK TX (1-800-996-7589) Monday – Friday, 8am to 5pm.

## KidCare Resource and Referral Services

Provides information on licensed child care providers, registered family day homes, school age care, summer programs, and other child care services. Servicing the community of San Angelo and 34 surrounding counties. Call toll free 1-866-271-6797.

## The Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services (TDPRS) Licensing Division

Provides information on the minimum standards for daycare centers and registered day homes, and takes concerns on facilities or providers. Call (915) 657-7400.

## United Way of the Concho Valley

P.O. Box 3710, San Angelo, Texas 76902

Hours of Operation: Monday-Friday / 8am to 5 pm

(915) 949-3716

- **Success By 6 @ Initiative** - Contact: Carol Harrison (915) 949-3716

- **First Information** - Contact: Karen Cline (915) 942-HELP (4357)

## Professional Organizations

- **Concho Valley Licensed Child Care Association (CVLCCA):** (915) 942-0576

- **Association of Registered Child Care Homes (ARCCCH):** (915) 949-6466

- **The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC):** 1-800-424-2400

# SELECTING QUALITY CHILD CARE



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