

# Observation Tips

## **Make an informed decision**

Like any parent, your first concerns are for the safety, health, and welfare of your child. Every program will have positive characteristics, but you must decide which things are most important for you and your child, and prioritize accordingly.

## **Look and listen**

You can tell a great deal by observing and listening to what is going on in the classroom or home. Did the children seem happy and were they enjoying activities? Did the teachers seem to be loving, nurturing and responsive to all children in their care? Were problems handled promptly and appropriately? Did the teachers seem like people you can trust with the health, happiness and well being of your child? Is this a place where you would feel good about your child spending many hours each day?

## **Ask questions**

If you have any questions or concerns, write them down as they occur to you. Ask for an opportunity to have your questions answered or your concerns addressed.

## **Pay attention to your instincts**

You know your child best. Pay attention to any feelings of uneasiness you may have experienced during site visits or interviews. Could you picture your child in this setting? Were the toys

and activities you observed the kinds your child would enjoy? If your child accompanied you on your visit, what was his reaction? Keep in mind that children respond in their own unique ways to new situations. Also, don't rule out other factors that could influence your child's reaction (for example, being hungry, tired, having a natural fear of new people or places). Trust your instincts and your ability to make wise decisions for your child.

## **When cost is a factor**

Carefully weigh the "pros" and "cons" of each teacher and facility that you visited. Decide which facility satisfies the greatest number of your priorities at a rate that you can afford. Keep in mind that the highest cost doesn't always guarantee the best teacher and facility. Likewise, the least expensive rates do not necessarily mean poor teachers and facilities.

## **A good choice**

Now that you have done your homework and some careful thinking, you are ready to make your choice. Remember, selecting and placing your child in an early learning program is just the beginning. You will want to talk to your new teacher often and make occasional visits to ensure that your child is safe and happy and that your decision was the right one.

# A Quality Checklist

## For Evaluating Early Learning Programs



Visit our Agency for Workforce Innovation – Office of Early Learning website at [www.vpkflorida.org](http://www.vpkflorida.org) or <http://www.floridajobs.org/earlylearning/index.html> or call toll free at: 1-866-357-3239 (TTY: 711)

	Provider 1	Provider 2	Provider 3
<b>WHAT TO LOOK FOR:</b>			
Do the children look happy, involved in activities and well-cared for?			
Do teachers get on the child's eye level to listen, talk and play with the children?			
Do teachers give individual attention to each child?			
Are teachers warm, kind, calm and patient?			
Are there sufficient materials such as blocks, books, puzzles, art supplies and toys for all the children and are they available throughout the day?			
Are well planned activities such as music, painting and dress-up play provided for children?			
Does the facility seem cheerful, clean and safe with equipment in good repair?			
Is hand washing and diaper changing done frequently?			
Is there adequate indoor space for play, naps, meals, belongings?			
Is the outdoor play area fenced, safe, well-equipped and supervised at all times?			
<b>QUESTIONS TO ASK:</b>			
Is the program licensed? Accredited?			
Are references and background checks conducted on staff?			
How many of the teaching staff have been employed in this facility or home for more than one year?			
Does the person who will be teaching your child have training in early childhood education, First Aid and CPR?			
How many children are there for each adult? (adult to child ratio)			
How many children are in your child's group? (smaller group size is a quality indicator)			
Are there policies/procedures in place for dropping off and picking up children?			
Are there policies/procedures in place to ensure that all children are present and accounted for during and following outdoor play, field trips, and other transition periods?			
Do teachers have written policies and procedures, including emergency plans, vacations, and substitutes?			
Are there written policies/information regarding: philosophy of education for young children; discipline; on-going staff education/training; illness and injuries, napping; and toileting habits?			
Do teachers welcome parent visits any time of the day and encourage parent involvement?			
Are creative activities (e.g. music, art) offered? Are they included in the rate?			
Are meals/snacks provided? Are they included in the rate?			
What are the rates charged? Are there additional fees for registration, materials, field trips, etc.?			
Will your child be happy in this program?			