



WHEN IT
COMES
TO
CHILD
CARE,
**QUALITY
MATTERS!**



Balancing the demands of parenting and work can be challenging for many new parents. Choosing a high-quality child care program may help set your mind at ease. *High-quality child care helps your child build important physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and language skills that will prepare her for later academic and life success.* The foundations of brain development happen in the first few years of a child's life. Children in high-quality child care are more likely to have positive experiences that help their brains develop to the fullest.

More Than Babysitting Quality child care is more than just finding someone to watch your child when you're not home. Most programs use some sort of curriculum to guide their program. Make sure the curriculum is appropriate for your child's age and development and that the schedule is flexible. Look for a program where your child feels comfortable, where the adults spend time on the floor interacting with your child, where he hears lots of language, and where he gets the chance to experience a wide variety of activities.

Benefits of High-Quality Child Care Being in a child-centered environment that promotes creativity and learning gives children many opportunities to develop important skills and tools that they will use for the rest of their lives. Young children in high-quality programs tend to have better language skills and more developed reasoning abilities than children in lower-quality programs. They are better prepared for school and perform better on math and language tests in elementary school. Children in high-quality programs are also less aggressive and get along better with others.

In-Home vs. Out-of-Home Child Care One important choice as a parent is whether you want your child to be cared for in your home or in an out-of-home environment. There are advantages and disadvantages to both choices. Choosing in-home care may make the adjustment to child care easier because your child will be in a familiar environment. Having someone come to your home to provide care is convenient, and you may feel more comfortable knowing your child is being cared for by someone whose sole focus is on your child. Professional in-home caregivers do tend to be more expensive and are not regulated by the state of Georgia. Be cautious in screening potential in-home caregivers.



Contact your local FACS
Cooperative Extension
Agent at 1-800-ASK-UGA1
(275-8421) for more
information on choosing
quality child care. Visit our
interactive Web site, *Child Care
Quality Matters!*, located at
www.gafamilies.org/ccqm/

From the
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Out-of-home care includes many different types of care, from taking your child to a friend or relative's home to enrolling him in a large child care center. Most out-of-home programs must meet strict state licensing regulations. Your child will also get the chance to interact with other children regularly while in most out-of-home settings. Out-of-home programs do tend to vary in quality, so be sure you're choosing a high-quality program. Good out-of-home care may have a waiting list, and you may have to pay more for higher quality programs than for low quality programs. Remember that your child's well-being and your peace of mind are worth the extra cost.

Indications of High Quality Child Care Quality child care can look different in different types of programs. But researchers have found that certain features of a child care program directly affect the care that children receive. These are some of the most well-documented quality indicators for child care programs:

- **Low adult-to-child ratios.** Children benefit when each adult is caring for a smaller group of children. When the adult-to-child ratio is low, caregivers are better able to be stimulating, responsive, warm, and supportive.
- **Small group sizes.** Children are more likely to receive responsive care in smaller groups. If your child is an infant, ask whether the program assigns your child to a primary caregiver who gets to know him well and helps him build a secure relationship.
- **Well-educated caregivers.** Adults with more education and training tend to be more sensitive and responsive to your child's needs and to provide a richer learning environment. Ask what credential the caregivers have and whether they receive ongoing training.
- **A nurturing environment.** Look for a program that makes you and your child feel welcome and secure. Caregivers should spend time establishing a caring relationship with your child by talking to him one-on-one, spending time playing on the floor with him, and responding when he cries, coos, or babbles. The program should welcome you to visit any time, provide you with written policies and procedures, ask you for specific information about your child, share information about your child's day, and involve you as a partner in your child's learning.

The Bottom Line When choosing a child care program, the most important consideration is finding a program that provides warm, nurturing care that supports and stimulates your child's development. Choose the highest-quality program that fits your budget and schedule, and remember that high-quality child care is worth the extra cost.

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▶ Finding Programs in Your Community

Your community has a local child care resource and referral agency whose responsibility is to link you with child care programs in your area. To find your local resource and referral agency, go to the Georgia Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (GACCRRA) at www.gaccrra.org and click on the city that's closest to your home. Trained Parent Counselors are familiar with the different child care options in your community and may be able to guide you to programs that best meet your family's needs.