

New Mexico Kids Child Care Resource and Referral-Program Checklist



There are several types of child care programs — Family Child Care Homes, Child Care Centers, Out of School Time programs. People use different terms when talking about them, such as: daycare, preschool, or child development center. Programs with a particular philosophy or sponsor may be referred to as: *religious, Head Start, Montessori, Reggio Emilia*, etc. New Mexico Kids Child Care Resource and Referral refers to them as **child care, education & family support programs**, and we feel strongly that **all** of these programs have a responsibility to keep children safe from harm, to nurture growth and to support learning in positive ways.

This checklist is designed to help you find a program that is a good fit for the individual needs of your child. It isn't the type of program that matters most. High quality child care can be found in homes, centers, and out of school time programs... AND child care of poor quality can be found in homes, centers and out of school time programs. It is very important to spend time talking with and observing child care professionals in action. This checklist does not include everything you should know and look for when considering a child care program or caregiver, but it can be helpful in your decision making process.

We encourage families to consider all their child care options. We hope you will have several programs to choose from, and that you will visit each one. Never leave your child in a home, center or out of school time program that you have not visited. At least two visits are best — the first one without your child, and the second with your child. Not taking your child the first time will allow you to observe more carefully and ask more questions. The relationship built between child and caregiver, along with regular communication between the child care program and family, is critical. Trust your instincts. If something tells you a program is not right for your child/ren, look elsewhere. *Feel free to call the New Mexico Kids Child Care Resource & Referral for help with finding other child care programs or to talk about choosing a program at 277-7900 or (800)-691-9067. Please visit newmexicokids.org for Licensing regulations regarding child care in New Mexico and other helpful information.*

Providers/Programs Visited

General Atmosphere:

	1	2	3	4	5
Do the children seem happy? Securely attached to their teachers?					
How long have caregivers worked in the program? Is turnover high? Why?					
Is spontaneity encouraged? Are the children & caregiver/staff having fun?					
Do teachers greet & talk with children & families as they arrive & leave?					
Is there an active parent group or opportunities for parent involvement?					
Does the caregiver provide information about the child's daily activities?					
Is the teacher/caregiver open to hearing from families about children's needs?					
Is there an emphasis on cooperation or competition?					
Do providers know how to include a child with special needs in activities?					
Are children encouraged to care for & respect one another?					
Are parents encouraged to visit at any time that their children are in care?					
Does it feel like "your kind of place?"					

Caregivers/Teachers:

	1	2	3	4	5
Are the children always supervised by an adult?					
Are the caregivers warm, nurturing & loving with the children? Are they patient?					
Are teachers sensitive & responsive? Do they seem to know & understand the children?					
Can you see that the caregivers genuinely <i>like</i> children?					
Does the caregiver/staff have a sense of humor? Do you hear laughter?					
Do you see teachers & children interacting? Do they seem comfortable with each other?					
Can the provider give you parent references to contact & talk with?					
Do teachers have training, experience, CPR & 1st Aid certificates? Do all adults have a background check clearance? (Ask to see proof)					
Do caregivers have education in a wide range of areas: health, safety & nutrition; activities/curriculum; learning environments; child development...? (Ask to see proof)					

Discipline/Guidance:

	1	2	3	4	5
Are discipline policies explained clearly? Is there opportunity for parent/guardian input?					
Is discipline handled without threat or harm to children?					
Is guidance age & developmentally appropriate?					
Do teachers deal well with difficult behaviors? (biting/teasing/hitting/whining/tantrums...)					

How are conflicts between children handled? Do you see evidence that caregivers help children of all ages develop self-control & learn how to solve problems?					
Program:	1	2	3	4	5
Is there a regular daily routine to provide children with a sense of security?					
Is there flexibility to accommodate individuality? Does each child get enough attention?					
Do activities encourage children to think, create, learn & explore?					
Are there a variety of play materials? (Enough books, blocks, games, art supplies, etc?)					
Is the TV/VCR on very little or not at all? Are programs suitable for children?					
Are boys & girls encouraged to play together? Are anti-bias attitudes supported?					
Is the program respectful to children of diverse cultural backgrounds?					
Is there quiet time as well as active time? Do children have enough "free time"?					
Are you comfortable with the caregiver's philosophy about play & learning?					
Are there field trips? Are children with special needs included?					
Do children seem interested & engaged, or do they seem bored & unchallenged?					
Is the program Licensed? Registered? In compliance with regulations? (Ask for proof)					
Is the program Accredited? By which Accrediting body? (Ask for proof & information)					
Age: Infants	1	2	3	4	5
Is each baby held lovingly? Do caregivers talk, sing, play & read to each of the babies?					
Is there space for little ones to safely explore while walking & crawling?					
Is there sight & sound stimulation in the baby room? (not so much that it's overwhelming)					
Toddlers					
Are there a variety of interesting activities available? Reading, music, art, finger play?					
Do caregivers/staff cooperate with parents helping children with toilet learning?					
Preschoolers					
Are there activities involving sharing, speaking & listening? Lots of reading, singing, art?					
School Age					
Are there a variety of activities to choose from that have been designed for school agers?					
Is there time for unwinding & fun as well as homework support during the school year?					
Safety:	1	2	3	4	5
Are toxic substances kept out of children's reach?					
When young children are present, are stairs barricaded?					
Are play areas & equipment clean, safe & well maintained? Outdoor play areas fenced?					
Are swimming pools fenced/locked when not in use? Is there always an adult present when the pool is accessible to children?					
Are electrical outlets covered or are safety outlets installed?					
Ask about any hidden dangers (like guns). Are they locked & completely inaccessible?					
Is there an emergency plan & is it practiced often? Are emergency #'s posted?					
Is there a sign in/out sheet? Is there a record of adults authorized to pick children up?					
Health/Sanitation:	1	2	3	4	5
Are rooms clean, bright, spacious & well ventilated? Are there cozy areas for quiet play?					
Do all children spend part of the day outdoors? Is there shade outdoors?					
Are medicines & treatments given with parent/guardian or doctor permission only?					
Are accident reports written up & is this information shared with parents/guardians?					
Are parents notified immediately when a child is ill? Is a separate sick area available?					
Are meals & snacks nutritious? Are menus posted or made available to parents?					
Are food preparation & eating utensils & toys sterilized properly?					
Are hands washed before & after eating? After changing diapers or toileting?					
Are dirty diapers disposed of properly? Is the changing area sanitized after each use?					
Do children have a rest time? Do they have their own cribs/mats/cots/linens?					