



Questions to Ask a Parent Reference



Ever wonder what to ask when you call a Parent Referral to check on a child care provider or program? You are not alone! This list is designed to give you a variety of possible questions to ask another parent about a child care center or family child care home provider. Check out each heading and pick-and-choose your favorite questions. Remember to ask open-ended questions so the parent can share his/her thoughts in an unrestricted way. Don't be shy – be proud of being a careful parent who is doing a great job selecting the best child care program for your child!

Enrollment Particulars

- ✧ How old is your child?
- ✧ How old was he/she when you enrolled in this program?
- ✧ How long has he/she attended this program?
- ✧ How many hours per week does your child attend?
- ✧ How long have you known the provider?
- ✧ If your child is no longer at this program, why did you leave?

Child's Perceptions

- ✧ Is your child happy to go to this program?
- ✧ Does your child enjoy child care?
- ✧ Does your child get a chance to make decisions and have choices in this child care program?
- ✧ Is your child happy when you pick him/her up on most days?
- ✧ What does your child like best about this program?
- ✧ How does your child feel about this provider?

Parent's Perceptions

- ✧ What are your favorite aspects of this child care program?
- ✧ What do you wish you could change about this program?
- ✧ Is there anything about this program that you think I should know?
- ✧ Do you feel that your child has been stimulated and has grown since being with this provider?
- ✧ What is your best memory of this program/provider?
- ✧ Would you recommend this program to a friend?
- ✧ Would you recommend this program without reservation?
- ✧ Would you choose this provider again?

Provider Profile

- ✧ What do you like best about this provider and his/her interactions with the children?
- ✧ What would you like to see this provider do differently?
- ✧ What are the provider's strengths? Weaknesses?
- ✧ How would you describe his/her personal characteristics?
- ✧ How does he/she relate to children?
- ✧ How does he/she treat your child?
- ✧ If the provider has children of his/her own, how does he/she interact with them?
- ✧ How does the provider handle stressful situations?
- ✧ How does the provider deal with problems or concerns?

Emergency!

- ☒ Have you or your child experienced an emergency situation at this program?
How was it handled?
- ☒ Do you feel that the provider stays calm (or would stay calm) in an emergency?

Environmental Aspects

- ☒ Do you feel that this is a safe place for children of all ages?
- ☒ Is the program set up to be stimulating for the children?
- ☒ Are there enough toys and materials for all of the children?
- ☒ Is the equipment clean and in good repair?
- ☒ How does the provider generally keep his/her home/classroom?
- ☒ Does the provider enrich the program with special activities such as field trips or events?
- ☒ Are you happy with the teaching style of the provider?
- ☒ Is there a curriculum with scheduled daily learning activities?
- ☒ Do the children get ample time inside and outside each day?

Discipline

- ☒ How does the provider discipline your child?
- ☒ Did you ever disagree with the provider's discipline of your child? How did you handle this?

Flexibility

- ☒ Have you ever had a change in your child care needs such as different days or hours? How accommodating was the program to short notice needs? Advance notice needs?
- ☒ What happens if the provider is sick?
- ☒ Is there back up care available?
- ☒ How much notice do you receive when the provider has a scheduled vacation or day off?

Daily Details

- ☒ Is this provider reliable on a daily basis?
- ☒ Does the program provide food for your child?
- ☒ When you pick your child up, how does he/she seem? Is he/she clean? Tired? Happy? Quiet?
- ☒ How does the provider seem by the end of the day?
- ☒ Do you feel welcome to stop in at any time?
- ☒ Does your child ever attend early in the morning or late in the day? How are these times of day handled?
- ☒ Have you experienced a lot of turnover in staff or families since you have been there?

Individual Sensitivity

- ☒ Do you feel that this provider values your child's uniqueness?
- ☒ Does this provider honor your values and culture?
- ☒ How does this provider customize the program for your child?
- ☒ Does your child have any unique attributes or needs? How does the provider adjust the program for your child?

Communication

- ☒ Have you ever had a disagreement or problem with this provider? How was it resolved?
- ☒ When you have concerns about the care your child is receiving, do you feel comfortable expressing your thoughts?
- ☒ Is it easy to talk to the provider?
- ☒ Do you feel that the provider is open and willing to discuss any issues as they arise?
- ☒ Do you feel comfortable giving feedback to the provider?

Fees/Finance

- ☒ Are changes in the fees communicated to you well in advance?
- ☒ Have there been a lot of rate increases since you enrolled in this program?
- ☒ Does the provider charge extra fees for any services or situations?
- ☒ Have you had any problems with the way this provider charges or collects fees?

Child Care Center Specific Questions

- ☒ Did you and your child experience staff turnover? How did the center prepare you and your child?
- ☒ How are staff transitions handled in the morning and the evening? Do you get an opportunity to speak with the teacher who worked with your child that day?
- ☒ Have you experienced any staffing and/or ratio problems with the center? How are these handled?
- ☒ Did your child 'move up' to the next classroom? How did the center transition your child?
- ☒ Do you feel that your child gets individual attention from the teachers?
- ☒ How do the teachers communicate with you on a daily/weekly basis?
- ☒ Do you feel comfortable speaking with the administrative staff and director?
- ☒ Is the director available and approachable on a daily basis?
- ☒ Are there extra optional activities offered by the center such as dance or music? Does your child participate in these?

Family Child Care Specific Questions

- ☒ Are there other adults (besides the family child care provider) who watch or interact with the children?
- ☒ Do you feel comfortable with the other adults in the home?
- ☒ If the provider leaves to pick up children from school, what arrangements are made for the younger children?
- ☒ How do the different ages of children get along?
- ☒ What happens when the provider is too sick to care for the children?

NOTES: _____

For assistance with all things related to child care,
please contact the City of Milpitas Planning and Neighborhood Services
Department's general line at (408) 586-3279.

