

Survival Guide for Working Moms

Who is taking care of the kids?

For many working moms, the thought of leaving your child in someone else's care is not appealing. But, that's what most moms do – for 13 million of the 18 millions children under the age of 5 in the U.S. This Survival Guide can help you work out the arrangement that is best for your family.

What's best for infants and toddlers?

Knowing what to look for can help you make sure that your child's day care arrangement will be nurturing and also help him or her get ready for kindergarten.

The better the child care, the better the child will do on vocabulary words and other measures of learning years later. Children who get little attention in daycare will be demanding and unhappy at home, and may have behavior problems later as well.

The good news is that the latest studies show that the stimulation, attention, and caring children get at home are still the most important influences on children's future learning and behavior. But, the quality of day care also makes a difference.

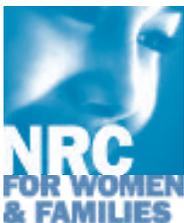
Most children will do well whether child care was provided by relatives, at family day-care settings, or at a center – **if** they get a good quality of care. Quality is measured in four ways:

- Ratio of caregivers to children. One adult can't take good care of more than 3-4 infants or young children, even if they are napping a lot of the day.
- Caregiver and child interaction – educational TV programs and tapes are not appropriate for children under two and are never a substitute for adults playing with and talking to children one-on-one.
- Babies should spend little waking time in cribs, car seats, or "jumpy seats" by themselves.
- Toddlers and older children should not be wandering around aimlessly.

How to help your children adjust

Helping infants and young children adjust to child care can be harder on moms than it is on the kids. Most young infants under 7 months of age will adapt to caring adults and seldom have problems adjusting to good child care. "Separation anxiety" is a normal part of development for children over 7 months. They need time and your support to "get to know" the caregiver. To help prepare your young child, parents can, play disappearing/reappearing games such as peek-a-boo and hide-and-seek. Help them understand that Mommy may go away, but she always comes back.

The goodbye time is very important. When it's time to leave, don't linger or show



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Child Care Checklist

Consider these to help you choose the best day care for your child

Location: How far is the child care from home? From your work? Is this convenient for both parents? Can either parent get there quickly in an emergency?

Hours: What hours of care are available? What happens if you are late in picking up your child? How are vacations and holidays scheduled?

Licensing/accreditation: Is the facility or home licensed or registered with the appropriate local government agencies? Have there been any violations? Is the program currently accredited; if so, by what organization?

Caregiver experience and training: What education, training and experience do the caregiver or center director and staff have? Do staff change too often for kids to build a trusting relationship?

Enough staff? Are there enough trained adults available to children on a regular basis? Are there enough caregivers to fill in if one is ill or on vacation? Do the child-staff ratios and the size of the groups of children fall within the nationally recognized standards below?

Age	Child-Staff Ratio	Maximum Group Size
0-12 Months	3:1	6
13-30 Months	4:1	8
31-35 Months	5:1	10
3 Years	7:1	14
4-5 Years	8:1	16
6-8 Years	10:1	20
9-12 Years	12:1	24

worry or upset. If you say a brief, upbeat goodbye, your child will probably stop crying and adjust more quickly. Having a special routine, such as a big hug and kiss and the same goodbye (whether it is "see you later alligator" or something else) will make the transition easier.

Spend at least an hour or two watching the daily routine at the day-care setting before you select it. Know how many children are there (and the maximum they will have) and get to know all the adults who might have contact with your child. If one woman is in charge, find out who provides back-up if she is sick or needs to be away, even for "just a few minutes." Those other caregivers, whether a husband, teenage children, or assistants, may be inexperienced or not motivated to care for young children.



Are you welcome to visit during normal operating hours before and after enrolling your child? Can you see all the areas that your child will stay?

Stay involved with the child-care provider(s); meet regularly and ask questions to make sure that things are going well. The more confident you are, the more relaxed your child is likely to be.

Toddlers may cry, pout, and refuse to go to child care or act angry in other ways. Preschoolers may regress and behave like a younger child. They may be more wakeful at night. This behavior usually goes away after a few days or weeks in high-quality child care.

You can help your child adjust to a new child-care arrangement. Try to arrange a short visit for the first time, and stay for as long as you can. Show your child that you like and trust the caregiver.

Some children like to carry a reminder of home when they go to child care. A family photograph or small toy can be helpful. Talk to your child about the caregiver to help prepare for this new experience. There are storybooks about child care that you and your child can read together.

After-school care

After-school programs can be hard to find. When you find one, the advantage is that your child is old enough to tell you what they do everyday, and what he or she likes and doesn't like about it.

The key to safety and security for children of all ages is an enthusiastic and qualified staff that keep children busy and happy. Most important, children under 12 need adult supervision after school and should not go home to an empty house. Kids in their pre-teen and early teens --when many parents think that after-school care is no longer needed--can get in a lot of trouble. Finding some type of care or adult supervision that you trust is best for their safety and your peace of mind.



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