

On-Site Visit: Interview Questions, and Checklist for a Home Daycare

One of the most important decisions you will make as a parent, is choosing a childcare provider. Before making your decision about a childcare provider, visit several facilities. The more you know, the easier your decision and the more comfortable you will feel making it. Visits can be as short as 15 minutes and as long as an hour; the more time you can spend, the better. You should expect: a warm greeting, short introductions to both adults and children, a brief tour, an explanation of fees and policies, and an invitation to stay awhile to see the daily routine and children playing. To help you narrow down your choices and make an informed decision, we've compiled a detailed list of interview questions, and a checklist to use as you visit each child care location. Before an interview, print out the checklist, and take it with you. Use these questions to help guide your search for a quality childcare provider. Take your time and review your options carefully.

Name of childcare provider _____

Phone number _____

Address _____

Date of visit _____

Questions to Ask the Potential Childcare Provider

Activities/Daily Schedule

Please describe a typical day.

May I see the daily schedule/routine?

What kind of activities will my child have the opportunity to participate in?

How often do you take the children outdoors?

Are children taken off the premises, to go on walks, the park, etc?

Do you let the children watch television? If so, how much, and what types of programs?

Do you have a nap schedule?

Where do the children nap?

General Questions

Can I see a copy of your license, CPR and First Aid, and any other certifications that you have?

What supplies/equipment do you provide, and what am I expected to provide?

Who are all of the people who would be around my child?

How many children do you enroll at one time?

What is the exact arrangement for payment? By check or cash? When and where?

What's your holiday schedule?

Is there a late-pickup fee?

Why do you work with children?

Emergencies

Do you have an emergency plan in case of a fire or earthquake, etc?

If you had to evacuate, do you have an emergency location that you would use?

How would I be notified in case of an emergency?

Do you have emergency training?

What procedures do you have in place for a child requiring immediate medical attention?

Which hospital would you use in case of an emergency? Is it close?

Health and Safety

- How frequently, will my child’s diaper be changed?
- What precautions do you take to reduce the spread of illness? What do you use to sanitize?
- Are babies always put to sleep on their back? On a firm, flat surface? In a crib?
- Are children ever transported in a vehicle?
- Are all children required to be immunized before attending your daycare?
- Are the children ever left unattended?
- What do you do if a child becomes sick while in your care?
- Are safety measures in place? First aid kit, plugs for electrical outlets, etc?
- Are all medicines, cleansers, and chemicals locked up and kept out of reach of children?
- Do you have smoke detectors installed and an accessible fire extinguisher?
- Does your home have heat and air conditioning? What temperature do you maintain?

Curriculum/Meals and Snacks

- If a preschool curriculum is provided: what will my child have an opportunity to learn?
- If meals and snacks are provided: what kind of foods do you serve the children? Are they healthy?
- Are the menus showing meals and snacks posted for me to review?
- Do you feed babies on demand or on a schedule?

Provider/Parent Communication

- Is parent involvement encouraged?
- What do you expect from me as a parent?
- How do you communicate with parents?
- Do you inform parents about their child’s day, behavior, growth, etc?
- Can I drop in to visit my child unannounced, at any time during the day?

Philosophy and Policies/Procedures

- What is your policy for administering medication?
- How do you handle behavior management and discipline of the children?
- What are your feelings on wetting, thumb-sucking, pacifiers, finishing meals, biting, etc?
- What is your over all philosophy towards caring for children?
- How do you comfort the children?
- What is your pick-up policy?
- How do you handle toilet training?
- How do you handle conflicts between the children?

Ending with

- Do you have space for my child?
- Can I take a copy of the contract and your policies/procedures home in order to review them?
- May I have some names and numbers of past and present families I could call for references?

Name _____ Phone # _____

A Quality Family Home Daycare Checklist

After meeting with the potential childcare provider in his or her home, take a moment to ask yourself the following questions while the interview and visit are still fresh in your mind. The following points are good ways to measure the quality of a home daycare. Also, contact your state's local licensing agency (in San Diego County 619-767-2200 or www.cclcd.ca.gov) in order to review their file on record.

Licensing/Experience/Qualifications

Yes/No

- Is the home daycare licensed and regulated by the state or local government?
- Is the license posted?
- Is the childcare provider CPR and first aid certified?
- Is the childcare provider experienced in the field of child care?
- How long does he or she anticipate owning and running a home daycare?
- Only while their children are at home, or is it their chosen career?
- Does the program strive to excel beyond basic licensing requirements?

Activities/Daily Schedule/Curriculum/Meals and Snacks

Yes/No

- Does the program provide a preschool curriculum?
- Are nutritious meals and snacks served to the children?.....
- Are menus showing the meals and snacks posted for you to review?
- What is the emphasis of the activities? To have fun? To learn? Both?
- Is there a daily balance of play-time and learning experiences throughout the day?
- Does the program keep up with children's changing interests?
- Are their age-appropriate toys and activities for each age group?
- Are the learning programs designed for each age group?
- Are the educational programs designed to prepare the children for kindergarten?
- Are the activities the kind your child enjoys?
- Do the children have a sufficient nap-time?
- Is there a consistent routine and a familiar schedule for the children?
- Are their times and places for my child to play quietly or actively? Alone or with others?....

Environment/Atmosphere

Yes/No

- Are there spacious dedicated areas for the children?
- Are there separate environments for each age group?
- Does the environment seem child-oriented?
- Are there knick-knacks, furniture, etc that children cannot touch?
- Are toys, materials, supplies, and the environment well organized?
- A stimulating, indoor play area where children can safely explore and discover?
- Large, outdoor play areas where children can safely run, climb, explore, and discover?
- Can the childcare provider see the entire playground at all times?.....
- Do you hear the sounds of happy children?
- Do the children seem happy and engaged?
- Are you comfortable in this atmosphere?
- Are the toys, furniture, and home in good condition?
- Is the home well lit and ventilated?
- Is the atmosphere bright and pleasant?
- Is there adequate space for my child?
- Are there adequate bathroom facilities?
- Is the bathroom a pleasant setting, encouraging children to use it?
- Are there separate diaper changing areas for each age group?

Provider/Parent Communication

Yes/No

- Is the childcare provider a nice person? (The foundation for positive communication)
- Was the childcare provider happy and eager to answer all of your questions?
- Is your participation and involvement encouraged?
- Will the childcare provider tell you what your child is doing every day?
- Are your questions, comments, and ideas welcome?
- Does the provider respect the language, culture and values of my family?
- Are parents welcome to drop in at any time?
- Does the childcare provider take your needs into consideration?
- Is the childcare provider accommodating and flexible?
- Are parents informed of accidents and anything out of the norm?
- Do you trust the potential childcare provider?

Provider/Child Interaction

Yes/No

- Is the childcare provider attentive to the children?
- Does the childcare provider treat the children with respect?
- Does the provider treat each child as an individual? Use their names?
- Does the provider give the children encouragement and provide positive reinforcement?
- Does the childcare provider instill confidence in the children?
- Does the provider speak to the children at their level, in a friendly and caring tone?
- Does the childcare provider use straightforward, simple words to talk with the children?
- Does the provider strive to instill sharing, kindness, and manners within the children?
- Are children greeted warmly and enthusiastically when they arrive?
- Are children given hugs and high-fives when they go home?
- Are children's needs quickly met, even when things get busy?
- Do the childcare provider and children enjoy being together?
- Are crying children responded to immediately?
- Are children comforted when needed?
- Does the childcare provider interact with infants down at their level?
- Are babies constantly cuddled and talked to?
- When the provider physically handles a child, such as when diapering, are they gentle?
- How capable do the providers seem at being able to resolve conflicts between children?
- Does the provider describe objects, actions, and their meanings to the children?
- Does the provider ask and answer all the children's questions?

Philosophy and Policies/Procedures

Yes/No

- Will I be given a written contract, parent handbook, and policies/procedures?
- Do I agree with the provider's policies and procedures?
- Do I agree with the behavior management and discipline philosophy?
- Do the childcare provider and I agree on weaning, toilet training, feeding, etc?
- Everyday, can I drop-off/pick-up my child within the provider's hours of operation?

Emergencies

Yes/No

- Does the provider have an emergency plan in case of a fire or earthquake?
- Does the provider have an emergency location that he or she would use?
- Would I be notified in case of an emergency?
- Does the childcare provider have emergency training?
- Are there procedures in place for a child requiring immediate medical attention?
- In case of an emergency, does the provider have a nearby hospital he or she would use?

Health and Safety

Yes/No

- Are child’s/provider’s hands always washed before and after eating/diaper changes?
- Are children encouraged to wash their hands?
- Is the environment safe, clean, and sanitary?
- Are all medicines, cleansers, and chemicals locked up and kept out of reach of children?....
- Are their smoke detectors and fire extinguishers?
- Does the home have heat and air conditioning?
- Is the provider’s home always kept at a comfortable and constant temperature?
- Are babies always put to sleep on their back, and on a firm, flat surface?
- Are indoor and outdoor play areas child-proofed and escape-proof?
- Are safety measures in place? First aid kit, safety plugs for electrical outlets, etc?
- Is there adult supervision at all times?
- Does the childcare provider have a strict sick-child policy?
- Are diapering, sleeping, food preparation, and play areas separate?.....

In General

Yes/No

- Is the childcare provider able to multitask without becoming stressed?.....
- Is the childcare provider a professional, dependable, mature, honest, and kind person?
- Is the childcare provider calm, patient, and loving?
- Are the providers the kind of people you would enjoy being with outside of the daycare?
- Did your child feel comfortable during your visit?
- Did your child like the other children?
- Does your child think it would be fun to go there?
- Will my child be happy here?
- Would you enjoy spending your day there?
- Is there a feeling of belonging at the home?
- Are you comfortable with the teacher to child ratio?
- Is this childcare provider able to accommodate the special needs of my child?.....
- Are the ratios and group size appropriate for my child’s age?
- When you and your child are apart, will you feel at ease, knowing your child is in this setting? ____

Notes

