

## CHOOSING HIGH QUALITY EARLY CARE & EDUCATION

*Finding the best early care and education for your family is one of the most important decisions you will make for your child.*

### What are some elements of a high quality program? What do I look for?

**1. The child care provider/teacher** – Look for someone who is warm and caring, attentive to and respectful of children’s individual needs. Does the teacher seem to enjoy being with your child and with children? Is the provider culturally sensitive, inclusive, and accepting of differences in ability, family circumstances and customs? Are children redirected/disciplined in positive ways rather than blamed, criticized or punished? Are positive social behavior and conflict resolution encouraged? Does the caregiver offer empathy and compassionate nurturing to crying and sad children? Does the provider understand child development, offer plenty of appropriate hands-on activities and keep children interested and challenged? Does the teacher often engage in conversations, reading, and storytelling with the children? What specific training, experience, education or certification does the provider possess?

**2. Staffing** – Are there enough adults for the number of children?



**3. Environment** – Is the environment orderly and organized into interesting activity areas? Are there enough developmentally appropriate materials and equipment available throughout the day (both indoors and outdoors)? Is outdoor play encouraged? Do the children seem involved in constructive activities, engaged in discovery and excited about learning? Do the children have ample opportunities to play, interact with peers, be creative, choose their own activities, and explore on their own? At the same time, does the caregiver introduce new concepts and experiences; expand upon children’s interests; and challenge children to reach the next level?

**4. Health & Safety** – Are the indoor and outdoor areas clean, safe and free from hazards? Do teachers have current training in CPR and first aid? Are healthy meals and snacks served? Do children and adults wash hands before meals? What are the health and emergency policies? Is the environment tobacco-free?

**5. Parent Involvement** – Are parents welcome to drop in and visit the center at any time? Does the staff respect the parent’s role as first teacher and most important person in the child’s life? Do parents feel comfortable talking with staff, asking questions and expressing concerns? Do staff provide updates on the child’s day including positive experiences?