Selecting a Quality School-Age Child Care

Child Care Aware® of America is our nation’s leading voice for child care. We advance a child care system that effectively serves all children’s growth, development and educational advancement and creates positive economic impact for families and communities.

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What are some things to consider when selecting a school-age program?

In addition to the type of child care setting and the program’s credentials, consider other factors like how they handle transportation and what activities are offered. A quality program will have a variety of activities to choose from that will be offered in a structured environment.

When choosing a before-/after-school program, think about:

- **Outdoor Time.** Many children do not get enough outdoor time or big body play during the school day. It is a good idea to make sure their before-/after-school program offers opportunities for outdoor activities and a back-up plan for bad weather (like using the school gym).

- **Academic Support.** If your child will need time to complete homework or projects after school, you will want to make sure there is quiet space where they can work. Consider whether they will have access to a computer if needed and whether the teachers are able to provide homework help.

- **Interest-Based Activities.** The hours before and after school are great times to socialize with peers and participate in activities that spark a child’s interest. Does the program offer activities based on the children’s interests, such as science experiments, nature walks, music, and sports?

- **Transportation.** If the child care program is not located on school property, you will need to consider how your child will get to and from school. Some school-age programs offer transportation to specific schools. If they are not able to provide transportation, is the child care provider on a school bus route?

When choosing a summer camp or school break care, think about:

- **Field Trips.** Field trips are a great way to learn and have new experiences. Some summer camps offer field trips to museums, the zoo, outdoor parks, and other exciting places. Before selecting a program, ask to view the field trip schedule. Decide whether you think your child will be interested in the planned trips. Ask about the chaperone policy and the adult to child ratio on day trips.

- **Pool Time.** Some summer camps have easy access to a pool and may make swimming a daily or weekly activity. Consider if pool time is important to you and your child and if you feel comfortable with them swimming at camp. Low adult to child ratio is especially important at the pool. Ask how many adults per child are required for these trips.

- **Themed Camps.** Many summer camps offer themed camp weeks. Does your child have a specific interest, like sports, drama, music, animals, or science? You can encourage and support their interests by finding a themed camp or a program that offers activities in those areas.

**VISIT!**

When you tour programs, ask questions and look for indicators of quality child care. These include health and safety measures, cleanliness, positive interactions, engaged and happy children, a variety of toys and materials, and more! For a complete checklist, visit www.childcareaware.org to download a list of questions to take with you on your tours.