

Child Care Program of *Excellence*TM



Your Guide to Finding
**THE BEST Child
Care**

Safety in Child
Care Check List:
**Don't Enroll Your
Child Without
This!**

**3 Simple Steps to
Stress Less
about Your
Child Care
Choice**

Deidre Nordel

Owner, Fun Ship Children's Center





From the desk of Julie Bartkus, Founder of the Child Care Program of Excellence

Dear Parents,

My name is Julie Bartkus and I'm the founder of the Child Care Program of Excellence. This letter comes to you with some incredibly exciting news! You've just stepped in through the doors of an

elite Child Care Program that is part of my Child Care Program of Excellence Mentorship (a groundbreaking program for a select number of child care owners who are dedicated to creating the best learning environments for the families they serve).

The commitment of your child care owner is to bring EXCELLENCE to life in all aspects of how their program is run. This includes managing their program around their BIG vision and attracting and retaining amazing staff and clients to be a part of their vision.

This is not a commitment they take lightly nor will you find many other child care owners in your community who are accepted into my Child Care Program of Excellence Mentorship. Just ask and be on the lookout for my Gold Seal with the current year. The seal and their use of the seal indicates that they are indeed a Child Care Program of Excellence Mentorship Member.

I'm delighted to share with you a couple of ways that you'll see EXCELLENCE in a Child Care Program of Excellence member.

1) You'll feel the difference. Through our mentorship, child care owners proactively and consistently strive to provide the highest quality learning experience for the children they serve. They strive to be top-notch in

their communication with parents and have a whole support system in place for themselves so their vision for their child care program gets DREAMIER with each passing day.

2) You'll experience the difference. Their commitment is to be the visionary in their child care program and bring on only top-notch staff to support their vision. Their leadership team participates in special professional development opportunities on a monthly basis so their entire team is highly motivated and the children who they serve have an experience that will not only benefit them today but one that will stay with them as they grow and mature into strong, empowered and happy adults. We anticipate your child reflecting back on their child care years exclaiming:

"Thank you for enrolling me with a Child Care Program of Excellence! The experience I had during my most formative years positively impacted my life in so many profound ways."

Congratulations on your decision to enroll with a Child Care Program of Excellence!!

Enthusiastically,



Julie Bartkus
Founder
Child Care Program of Excellence
www.ChildCareProgramofExcellence.com



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3 Steps to STRESS LESS About Your Child Care Choice



Planning for a Successful Child Care Tour

The time has finally come to start looking for a child care program in which to place your child. As a new parent, your emotions are probably all over the place. You are worried you are going to forget something or forget to ask an important question. Even though this can be a daunting process, it doesn't have to be. Here are 3 steps to help you stress less when making your child care choice.

1 Develop Your Plan of Action

First you need to do some research and answer the following questions.

- ☆ How far am I willing to travel from home to get to the center?
- ☆ How far from work am I willing to drive to get to the center?
- ☆ How far is my work from the center?
- ☆ Where in town are the centers I am looking at located?

Before You Make Your First Phone Call

Before you make any phone calls, write down any appointments you have coming up, kids' activities (sports, dance, karate), whether your spouse will be out of town, etc. It has happened to everyone: You lose track of time and you have to be somewhere else on the day you have a tour scheduled. Once you are familiar with your schedule, you can start calling the centers where you want to tour

After you have made your appointments you may want to do the following:

- ☆ Put all your appointments in your favorite calendar app. If you use Google calendar, you should also get an alert on your phone on the day of your tour. A day planner or calendar that you have with you all the time to write in works too.
- ☆ Inform your spouse or significant other of the dates and times of your tours, in case he or she needs to pick up any older children from an activity. ▶



2 Stay Organized

When you are visiting several centers at once, it can be easy to get things confused. Here are some tips to help keep you organized.

- ☆ Buy one different colored folder for each center you visit.
- ☆ Label each folder with the name of a center.
- ☆ If you have an accordion folder, you may want to put the individual folders in it and keep it in your backseat for easier access.
- ☆ Make a list of questions to ask ahead of time and print one for each folder.
- ☆ As you visit each center, take the color-coded folder in with you.
- ☆ Take extra pens in your purse.
- ☆ Take a notebook to make extra notes in.

3 Keep a Checklist of Questions

There are so many questions to ask when you go on tour, where do you start? Here are some of the most important questions to ask to help make your tour a success.

- ☑ Who is in charge of the center?
- ☑ Who is the lead teacher in the child's classroom?
- ☑ Where is the camera in the classroom and is there a portal on the center's website where you can view your child?
- ☑ What is the discipline policy?
- ☑ What is the sickness policy?
- ☑ What is the policy on food allergies? Do you have to bring your child's food?
- ☑ Whom do you talk to on the kitchen staff if you have a question?
- ☑ What is the drop-off and pickup policy?
- ☑ Whom do you inform if your child is coming in early/late?
- ☑ Whom do you talk to if you're going to be late picking up your child?

- ☑ Is after-hour care offered?
- ☑ Does the center have an open-door policy?
- ☑ What kind of curriculum is used?
- ☑ If your child needs medicine during the day, where is it kept?
- ☑ If your child has an Epi-pen, where is it kept?
- ☑ Does your child's school bus go to this center (for older children who come after school)?
- ☑ What is the center's emergency plan and how are parents contacted in case of an emergency?
- ☑ Does the center have a storm shelter (for those who live in tornado-prone states)?
- ☑ Do the children go on field trips?
- ☑ Whom do you need to inform if someone other than yourself, spouse or significant other is dropping off/picking up your child?

Going on a tour to find a great child care program for your child can be a nerve-racking endeavor. However, by using the tips for planning and asking some or all of the questions on the list, you should leave feeling well-informed and confident in making the right choice.

Go home, discuss things with your significant other and take the time you need to make sure you are choosing the right center. If you have any uneasiness about any of the centers you visited, trust your intuition. Also remember that you are not chained to one center; you can switch at any time. In the meantime, you are bound for a victorious tour that will lead to the right choice for your family. ■



7 Ways

to Be Involved in Your Child Care Center



By Mary Wardlaw, Owner | The Children's Center

A child care center's best resources are its parents! As the owner of a child care center, I can tell you that our parents are like treasure to us. We love it when parents are involved in the special activities in the classroom, when they give us insight on their children or when they supply toilet paper tubes or frozen juice can lids for classroom projects. We love our jobs and we love your kids – but the icing on the cake is that extra=special feeling when parent, teacher and child are all connected. Here are 7 practical ways that parents can get involved in their child's classroom.

1. Share special things from home. Read the newsletter every month and look at the posted weekly lesson plans to see what your child is learning. There may be something you can share that can enrich the learning experience for the classroom. For instance, maybe your child's class will be learning about pets, and you can offer to bring your pet chinchilla to the classroom during circle time. That's a BIG win for the kids, and the teacher will love you for it.
2. Offer up recyclables. You may not know this but preschool teachers love paper towel tubes and toilet paper tubes, milk caps, frozen juice can lids, egg cartons and many other items families typically throw away. Ask your child's teachers if they have a list of items they would like you to save and bring in.
3. Bring in empty food boxes or containers that represent food from different cultures. We are always looking for ways to increase our multicultural environments – especially for the cultures represented in our classrooms.
4. Join in on party days. We love parent participation, especially on party days. So much is going on, and if parents can lead the different games and activities, that helps the teachers be available to make sure everything is going smoothly. If you're not comfortable leading an activity, offer to take pictures of the class with the classroom camera or tablet so the teachers can send out pictures by email or on social media to share the children's special day.
5. Come to parent meetings. Many child care centers have parent advisory meetings, and attendance is typically low. We would love to have your input in these meetings so we can plan activities that will be beneficial to your families and so we can make sure you have important information about upcoming events as well as have a chance to shape how those events will happen.

6. Attend parent-teacher conferences. Conferences may seem like an elementary school activity, but it's never too early to meet with your child's teacher and talk about what your child is learning and what your child has already accomplished. Most quality child care programs have a child development tracking program that helps them understand what children should be learning at every stage of development. The teachers can share these things with you and let you know what you can do at home to help your child reach the next stage.
7. Respond to survey requests. This may be one of the most beneficial things you can do to help your child care program, and it takes only a few minutes of your time and can be done at your convenience. If a program wants to continually improve, the best way to do that is to see from the parent's view what is great, and what needs some work. You won't hurt our feelings, I promise! We just want the truth so we can do whatever we need to do to be the BEST.

Maybe you can't do all of these things, but if every parent would choose one or two of these ways to be involved, our child care programs would be so much better for it. We love our families! Every family is unique, bringing a richness to our environments, and that's why we love it when our families are involved in our child care programs. ■



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Mary Wardlaw has been joyfully wrapping her arms around families for the past 24 years after the seed was planted early on in her by her parents, who were both educators. Loving children has always been at the heart of Mary's vision for The Children's Center, located in Niles, Michigan.

The Top 10 Characteristics of a High-Quality Child Care Program

By Jameela Allen, owner | Themba Creative Learning Center

For many new parents, the thought of choosing the right child care or preschool for their child can be one of the most stressful decisions they face. Worry about finding the best environment with loving caregivers can cause them to lose sleep. We've all heard the horror stories. No parents want to be guilty of learning that the child care program they spent so much time choosing for their child is on the news for some sort of horrifying incident.

As an early childhood professional, I know how important this decision is, so I'd like to share with you some things to look for when you are searching for child care programs for your little ones. There are several indicators of quality that you should be looking for. A high-quality child care program provides a safe and nurturing place for children to play and grow through activities that help children develop physical, social, emotional and intellectual skills.

More and more, research tells us that our children's healthy development depends on safe and positive experiences during the first few years of life. If you are a parent who works or attends school or training during these early years, choosing quality child care is one of the most important decisions you will ever make for your child.

According to research from the American Academy of Pediatrics, children who attend high-quality programs demonstrate better skills in math, language and cognition; are better at developing interpersonal relationships; and have better behavioral self-regulation than children who attend lower-quality programs. So it's not enough to be average. The research says that in order for children to be successful, they need to be in programs with exceptional standards and staff.

The Top 10 Characteristics Of A Quality Child Care Program Are:

1. Teachers engage in warm, meaningful conversations with children and families and recognize children's accomplishments.
2. The program's curriculum addresses all development areas and provides open-ended experiences.
3. Teachers modify their teaching strategies to meet the children's developmental needs.

4. Teachers use multiple assessment methods to develop goals.
5. The program has proper hand-washing, diapering and cleaning procedures.
6. Teachers have an educational background in early childhood.
7. The program communicates to parents in a variety of ways on a daily basis.
8. The program develops professional relationships within the community to enhance the children's learning outcomes.
9. The program is designed for teachers to supervise children by sight and sound at all times and proper student-teacher ratios are maintained at all times.
10. The program shares written policies and procedures with families and is licensed and/or regulated by a state agency. ■



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jameela Allen's Themba Creative learning Center is in Lanham, Maryland. Jameela, a former special education teacher for District of Columbia Public Schools, believes children should be provided with an environment in which they can explore, wonder, create, investigate, ask questions and enjoy the world in which they live.

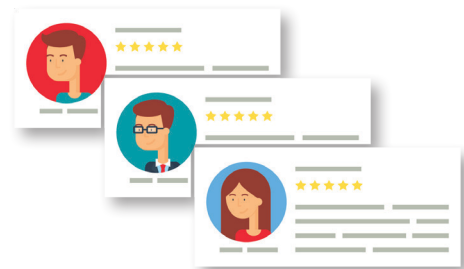
How to Spot Red Flags



Everything you see, hear and smell when you walk into a child care program will indicate whether that program is one where you should enroll or one that you should avoid. Everything matters.

You should see evidence of state-approved curriculum. Are lesson plans posted? Are samples of what the children are learning that week displayed in the classrooms? What is posted on the walls?

Is there outdoor space — places to run, things to climb? Is the outdoor space safe? What kind of communication does the center have with its parents? Are there daily reports and pictures? Are there periodic conferences? What kind of feedback will you get on your child?



Loud yelling, or a teacher's voice far above the children's, is a red flag. You should feel positive energy. You want to see child engagement, not chaos. You should see smiling staff. The center should smell clean.

Can you see yourself having a relationship with the person giving you the tour? Is she friendly? Are your questions being answered? Do you see children running up and hugging teachers and the director?

Will the center give you a list of current enrolled families whom you can speak with? What do online reviews reveal?



Talk to classroom teachers. Do you feel comfortable? Do you feel a sense of trust?

Did the director or owner invite you to pop in for a visit anytime once you enroll?

The Magic Bullet of Parenting

By Deidre Nordel, Owner | Fun Ship Children's Center

"If there is one thing I can do to make sure my child is successful, what is it?"

This is a question I wish more parents would ask because we all want our own children to be successful: to graduate from high school, have a good job, have a happy marriage and family, be more successful than we are or all of the above. IS there one thing or is it a multitude of things that we must do? Certainly, the more we do for and with our children, the better it is. But, there is one "magic bullet" you can give to your young children to help them become successful adults.

Read to your children every day! Yep, that's all you have to do. Read to them every day. When I would breastfeed my infant children, I read to them from the book I was enjoying at the time – self-help books, romances, westerns, Harry Potter, whatever it was. My husband read "The Chronicles of Narnia" and Harry Potter books to our kindergartner and first-grader as they went to sleep at night. Many times it takes only five minutes to read a children's story, so it doesn't require a huge amount of time. As our children grew older, I set a good example by reading on my own.

By taking five minutes out of your day to spend with your child, you are conveying many important messages and teaching good lessons. You are telling your children that they are important because your time is precious. You are

improving their vocabulary and their socialization skills. You are conveying to them that reading is important so they will be more interested in it in the future. You also have the opportunity to expand their minds into a bigger world than their small community.

Many studies show that reading to your child has many beneficial effects, not only in literacy but in math and other cognitive skills as well.¹ A study in Australia found that "these differences in reading and cognitive skills are not related to the child's family background or home environment but are the direct result of how frequently they have been read to prior to starting school."² Many other articles that discuss the benefits of reading can be found online.

Reading materials are easy to obtain these days. Books can be checked out at your local library for free. Some libraries also have online books that you can check out and read on your smart phone or tablet. Thrift stores usually have a plethora of children's books that can be purchased for as little as 25 cents or a dollar. Many inexpensive books can be found online, as well, at well-known book sellers like Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com. Reading is so important to your children's good development and learning, it is essential you find a way to immerse them in good reading materials. ■



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Deidre Nordel exclaims that her heart would be full if every child had a safe and nurturing place to go while their parents were at work. Since 2006 her days have been joyfully spent creating that place for children. Her child care program — Fun Ship Children's Center, in Hawthorne, California — is a place where children and their families are welcomed, their identities are affirmed and their minds are challenged.

1 <http://www.nea.org/grants/facts-about-childrens-literacy.html>

2 <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/research/readtoyoungchild.pdf>

Safety in Child Care Checklist

Don't enroll your child without this!

It's hard for parents to part with their little ones for the day. Finding the right child care facility for your child will give you peace of mind, though, when you can't be there to take care of your child. Before enrolling your child at any child care center, make sure you take the time to thoroughly check it out. This handy checklist can help you make a sound decision.

1. Child-to-staff ratio

Your child should be supervised at all times. Depending on the age of your child, you'll want to make sure that the child care center has the proper amount of supervision. Check your state's requirement for child-to-staff ratios and make sure the centers you visit, at minimum, meets those ratios.

You can do this through visiting your state's licensing website or ask a child care center for a copy of the licensing rule book.

2. Properly trained caregivers

When choosing a child care center, you should not be shy with finding out about the integrity of the staff there. They should be trained in child development or early childhood education. They should also be friendly. If you pick up any negative vibes, keep looking for another facility that you feel comfortable with.

3. Licensing and inspections

The child care center you choose must be licensed. It should also be inspected often for cleanliness and health maintenance. Don't be afraid to inquire about this. A center that has nothing to hide will be happy to show you around and answer all of your questions without hesitation.

4. Illness protocol

A good child care center will have a written policy in regard to how it cares for sick children. Find out what will happen should your child become sick while at the child care facility and how staff will care for your child before you return to pick up the child.

5. TV limits

Does the center you're considering allow children to watch TV on a regular basis? When it does show programs to the children, what is it showing? These are things to look into further because some viewing, particularly on special occasions, is of no harm but you don't want to leave your child in a place that simply uses a TV for entertainment.

6. Safe environments

Are the rooms equipped with proper safety features like outlet covers? Does the furniture have sharp edges? Are the toys in good condition? Are the playground facilities rust-free, enclosed and safe? Staff at a good child care center will take you on a complete tour so you can see every place your child will be. If it doesn't appear safe for sleep, learning or play, keep looking.

7. Proper emergency plans

Finally, one of the things you want to be sure of is that the child care center is equipped with smoke alarms and fire extinguishers and has an emergency evacuation plan. Should there be any kind of emergency, you'll want to know your child is in good hands.

Nothing is more important than your child's well-being. Use this checklist to help you ask the right questions. If something doesn't sit right with you, then don't enroll your child and keep looking until you feel confident about the place you're trusting to care for your little one.



Safety
Checklist

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION with Your Child Care Program



A Child Care Program of Excellence values the word “partnership.” Directors and owners view themselves as partners with parents in making your youngster’s child care experience the best it can be.

Here are a couple of communication tips to help you effectively partner with your child care program:

- ☆ When you have a concern, bring it up immediately. No concern is too small.
- ☆ Talk with your child’s teacher first. Your child’s teacher is a person who is incredibly passionate about educating and inspiring your child. If for any reason you feel your concern isn’t addressed adequately, schedule a meeting with the director. If after meeting with the teacher and director you feel your concern was not resolved, contact the owner. ***If the teacher or director is not available to talk when you drop off or pick up your child, call the school to schedule an appointment. Other ways to get in touch with the school in addition to in person and by phone are via email or, generally, through the center’s website.*
- ☆ If you notice a change in behavior in your child, talk to the teacher about it. The teacher might have an insight into the change or your bringing it up will prompt the teacher to pay close attention to the situation to help assess it. ■



Why Enroll Your Child in High-Quality Child Care?

Enrolling your child in a high-quality child care program is an investment that you make in your child during the most formative years of his or her life. The value extends far beyond someone simply watching your child; it’s a priceless opportunity for socialization, emotional growth and a solid educational foundation.

Consider that children enrolled at a high-quality child care:

- ☆ Learn how to get along with others, including social interaction and conflict resolution. These are skills they will use the rest of their lives!
- ☆ Receive benefits of developmental screenings, followed up by parent-teacher conferences so you can learn how to help your child on the track toward kindergarten readiness.
- ☆ Have multiple learning experiences they likely would not get at home, including hands-on, sometimes messy, science and nature education and exploration.
- ☆ Follow a curriculum. Standards are in place for progression from one classroom to another.
- ☆ Have a more advanced vocabulary, since child care teachers read with the children several times a day. A child’s first five or six years are the most important time for him or her to be immersed in a high-quality environment to positively stimulate brain development. Studies have shown that the difference in vocabulary between a child who is read to compared to one who is not can be 40,000 words or more.
- ☆ Graduate from high school at a higher rate.
- ☆ Get jobs at a higher rate.
- ☆ Are all-around more productive, involved citizens who are leading happier lives. ■

Meet Our Featured Child Care Expert...

Deidre Nordel

Owner, Fun Ship
Children's Center



DEIDRE'S VISION FOR CHILDREN

FUN SHIP Children's Center is a place where every child has the opportunity to fly, jump, and adventure into the best possible future. Through exploring the world and learning from nature, they discover their passions in a safe and encouraging environment.

Deidre's mission as the captain of Fun Ship is powerful and one she doesn't take lightly. Part of her mission is empowering, inspiring, and educating the future of Planet Earth — our children. The other part of her mission is serving as a powerful source of transformation for the community of Hawthorne.

FROM THE DESK OF DEIDRE NORDEL...

If every child had a safe and nurturing place to go while their parents were at work, my heart would be full! If every child could bring to life the song that's in his or her heart, I will know that my mission is complete. Being the owner of Fun Ship Children's Center is an amazing opportunity to play a small part in helping the children go on to lead lives that are in harmony with their desires. It's my opportunity to partner with the parents and community of Hawthorne to provide quality care and education for the children. We've created a place where smiles are plentiful and love is abundant. I've recently rewritten the old Coke song to represent the feelings in my heart for what we strive to do daily at Fun Ship Children's Center:

"I'd like to build the world a school and furnish it with love, grow apple trees and honey bees and snow white turtle doves.

I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony. I'd like to hold it in my arms and keep it company.

I'd like to see the world for once all standing hand in hand, and hear them echo through the halls for peace throughout the land."

Even though our program has been in existence since 1963, I've been at the helm since 2014. My husband, Steve, and I take great pride in our bright yellow building that we see as just one source to unite our community while giving children a safe and nurturing place to grow and flourish while their parents confidently go about their day. Our building once served as a fire station for the community — Steve loves that piece of trivia and recently found the historical marking on our building that he proudly shows off. Being in child care for over 10 years and being a mom for over 34 years, I am passionate about helping all parents find quality child care that works best for their needs and values. I hope you'll stop in or call and say hello! I am also available to speak at events where my expertise would be beneficial in educating participants on selecting quality child care as well as the top mistakes parents make when selecting child care for their children. Companies also find tremendous value in partnering with me to help reduce employee callouts due to lack of quality child care.

Deidre Nordel Welcomes You
to the community at:



Fun Ship Children's Center



Deidre Nordel, Owner

"These people are Amazing! When my grandson started going to this place over a year ago he had a problem speaking/ forming his words, now he doesn't stop talking and can read & write his alphabet and numbers. I can't recommend them enough. He has a clique of friends now that will all be going to the same school, I'm sure they will be life long friends. The love and attention these teachers give those kids ... you couldn't ask for better people. Thank you Fun Ship Staff!!" - Ifemi Kat



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Fun Ship Children's Center is dedicated to preparing young children for success in kindergarten and through their entire educational careers, laying the groundwork for more successful adults.