

Finding the Right Child Care

Tips to Help you Choose Quality Child Care for Your Kids

Muffy Berryhill, First 5 Shasta Executive Director

Denise Snider, First 5 Tehama Executive Director

Leaving your child in someone else's care is never easy. Because your child may spend much of his or her time in child care, it's important to choose an experienced and educated caregiver who can offer your child a consistent and nurturing environment. Finding the right child care provider requires you to know what you're looking for and have the resources to find it.

First 5 Shasta and First 5 Tehama offer the following tips for finding quality early care for your child.

Start early. Get an early start on your search. Regardless of the type of care you are considering, whether a child care center or a licensed family child care provider, finding a good match can take time.

Make a call. Local agencies can provide information to help you with your search. In Tehama County, call Child Care Referral and Education at (530) 529-3131. If you live in Shasta County, call Early Childhood Services, Resource and Referral at (530) 225-2999.

Ask about finding quality child care and a list of providers in your area. The following questions can also help you narrow your options:

- What child care options are available in my area?
- What are the child care licensing requirements in my area?
- How can I get information on how various providers are evaluated?
- Which providers are "accredited" and offer enhanced care and learning environments?

Visit and ask questions. When looking for a caregiver in either a home or child care center, visit and take a look around. Asking questions can also help you determine the quality of care and if a provider is right for your child.

- What is the provider's education and experience in child care?
- Is the provider warm and caring with children?
- How does the provider handle emergencies?
- How many children does each provider look after?
- Can the provider offer consistent care over time?
- Does the center or home have safe, age-appropriate toys and activities that young children like?
- Do the activities and surroundings encourage learning?

- What is the provider's approach to discipline?
- Does the provider respect and support parents?
- Does the caregiver acknowledge and respect your culture?
- Are references available?

Make a choice. Consider your observations when deciding who will provide quality care for your child. Making a list of pros and cons can be helpful. Don't be afraid to trust your instincts because you know what's best for your family.

Stay involved. Once you choose a qualified caregiver, develop a partnership with that person. Talk regularly with your early care provider about your child's activities and progress. Share relevant information about your home life to help your provider understand your child's life and behavior.

For more information on finding quality early child care, and providing your child with a safe environment for exploring and learning, contact your local First 5 commission:

First 5 Shasta, (530) 229-8300, www.first5shasta.org
First 5 Tehama, (530) 528-1395, www.first5tehama.com

About First 5 Shasta

Research shows that a child's brain develops most dramatically in the first five years and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child's growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. Based on this research, California voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to support programs for expectant parents and children ages 0 to 5. To date, First 5 Shasta has invested approximately \$12 million in Prop. 10 revenues in programs and services that meet local needs.

About First 5 Tehama

Research shows that a child's brain develops most dramatically in the first five years and what parents and caregivers do during these years to support their child's growth will have a meaningful impact throughout life. Based on this research, California voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998, adding a 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes to support programs for expectant parents and children ages 0 to 5. To date, First 5 Tehama has invested approximately \$6 million in Prop. 10 revenues in programs and services that meet local needs.

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