



## Choosing Infant Childcare – Recommendations from Birth To Three

### Safe and Clean

Does caregiver follow recommended safety guidelines? For example, putting baby on his/her back to sleep, crib meets current specifications and does not contain pillows, blankets which are suffocation hazards. Are sharp corners padded, electric outlets covered, small chokeable objects out of reach, stairs blocked with baby gates? Is diaper changing area separate from food handling/eating area, etc?

(List of childproofing guidelines is in INFANTS curriculum, Session 9)

### Quality Caregiver

Second only to ensuring the child's physical safety, is the caregiver's quality of interactions with the baby. Caregivers should hold, rock, cuddle, seek eye contact, and respond to smiles, crying, vocalizations and interests, play with, talk to, sing to and support the child in exploring. Caregiver should demonstrate affection and responsiveness toward baby.

### Continuity of Care with Primary Caregiver

One primary caregiver should be available to baby. Baby will develop attachment to caregiver, which will allow baby to feel secure and have sense of trust. If a caregiver changes, be aware that baby will need to build trust with new person.

### Individualized Care

Look for a caregiver who demonstrates respect for each baby as an individual. Each baby has his/her own distinct rhythm, individual differences and needs related to eating, playing, sleeping, social interaction, and quiet time. Care that attempts to fit young babies into rigid schedules will be less supportive of baby's healthy development.

### Stimulating and child-friendly environment

Baby is given the opportunity to explore safely. Toys, books and safe household objects are available for baby to explore. Babies experience both indoors and outdoors. As age-appropriate, babies are allowed time on the floor as well as upright, either being held, or in bouncy seat, high chair, etc. Babies are given the opportunity to socialize with other babies or children, and/or with caregivers. Environment is set up to encourage exploration and interaction. (For example, caregiver does not leave baby alone in crib for long stretches while making lunch or changing other children's diapers.)

### Group Size (Recommendations from Zero To Three)

Smaller groups help promote quality play and relationships with others. For children not yet mobile, group sizes should be no larger than six, and the caregiver/infant ratio should be no more than 1:3. Even when there are an appropriate number of caregivers, when there are too many infants and toddlers in one group, the quality of the baby's experience can be compromised.

### Parent/Caregiver Relationship

Are parents welcome to visit or drop by at any time? Do parents feel comfortable asking questions and making suggestions? Is caregiver sensitive to parent's values, culture and childrearing practices? Does caregiver support mother breastfeeding while baby is in care? Does caregiver provide information to parents about baby's experiences while in care?