

Characteristics of Quality Care:

INFANTS

- **Caregiver**

- Understands developmental stages.
 - Is flexible.
 - Promotes open communication with parents.
 - Shares through daily details and baby's special moments
 - Understands that a child's first time in care is a major transition.
 - Welcomes and addresses parent concerns.
 - Establishes a sleep/eat pattern, based on baby's needs.
 - Responsive and caring, warm and affectionate
 - Makes eye contact and speaks softly to baby, talking about things that are happening.
 - Pays close attention. Talks to infants during diapering and feeding.
 - Interacts with baby throughout the day
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- **Environment**

- Gives warm, welcoming feeling when entered.
 - Specific diapering area with surface that can be disinfected
 - Uses universal precautions during diaper changes and proper hand-washing technique
 - Clean and maintain for an infant (flooring is clean, soft edges on furniture, gates on stairways)
 - Toys disinfected routinely, rotated and replaced when needed
 - Quiet, monitored napping area (consider details such as lighting, music, and appropriate bedding)
 - Infant area is safe from distractions, confusion and over-stimulation
 - Infants can be seen and heard at all times
 - Enough space for the child to move around and safely explore
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- **Program**

- Ask if the provider travels regularly with children, transporting to/from school or taking field trips
- Find out what babies do when provider is involved with other children in circle time, doing a craft, etc. And if babies are included in these activities
- While provider is involved with infants, other children have toys and activities to keep them involved and stimulated
- Babies are held and moved to a new place or position, given a variety of things to look at and do
- Provider interacts with infants, playing simple games, talking, reading, and singing to familiarize them with language and keep them involved and stimulated

- Offers a variety of accessible, age-appropriate toys, materials, and activities including:
 - Soft toys and dolls, mobiles, bright pictures of faces
 - Rattles and toys that make sounds when batted, squeezed or mouthed
 - Lullabies, nursery rhymes, finger plays, simple songs, peek-a-boo
 - Cloth, vinyl, or cardboard books with bright pictures
 - Large soft blocks, large beads, large balls, nesting toys
 - Fat non-toxic markers and crayons, floating water toys
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Toddlers and Twos



• Caregiver

- Is loving and responds to child's needs in a timely fashion
 - Really enjoys being with children and provides lots of hugs, cuddling, and affection
 - Has experience and training necessary to provide developmentally appropriate activities
 - Helps parent to always feel welcome and a most valuable member of the team
 - Keeps parent informed of child's progress
 - Provides close supervision, individual attention and is directly involved
 - Makes clear rules and sets appropriate boundaries
 - Intervenes calmly to redirect a child's interest, settle conflicts and address behavior issues, using these occasions as learning experiences by providing language and modeling the expected behavior
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• Environment

- Surroundings are clean and safe for exploration of the environment
 - Designed for children, with toddler sized equipment and furniture
 - Space is large enough for children to move and play without competing for space
 - Enough materials are provided to prevent children from having to wait too long for turns
 - Room arrangement allows for close supervision, providing chances for child to be alone but still in view
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• Program

- Provides lots of interesting things to promote exploration
- Diapering, feeding, toileting, and dressing are used as educational activities by explaining and describing what is happening and allowing children to try doing some of these things for themselves

- Opportunities are given for lots of gross motor activities (crawling, climbing, exploring) and active physical play both indoors and outdoors
 - Allows time for lots of language experiences: reading, singing, talking, and listening to child throughout the day
 - Allows child to be independent and in control, when appropriate;
 - Child is encouraged to explore and create artwork with non-toxic paint, large crayons and play-dough, with “masterpieces” displayed at the child’s level
 - Provides movement to music, safe, toddler-sized instruments and sturdy tape players
 - Offers a variety of accessible, age-appropriate toys, material, and activities including
 - Knobbed puzzles, large stringing beads, large blocks, sorting/nesting toys, large pegboard
 - Board and picture books, recordings with song rhymes, simple stories
 - Sand and water play, with floating toys and measuring containers
 - Kitchen cupboard with safe pots, pans, utensils, small broom, toy telephone
 - Large riding, pushing and pulling toys (wagon, shopping cart, etc)
 - Baby dolls, stuffed animals, puppets, wooden people, animals and vehicles.
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• THREES, FOURS, AND FIVES

• Caregiver

- Frequently praises children and focuses on positive actions
 - Teaches children appropriate expressions and words for feeling and gives children opportunities to explore feelings
 - Supports children’s independence with dressing and toileting and respects each child’s toileting stage and need for privacy
 - Encourages children to listen to others, to try to see a different point of view, and come up with solutions for conflicts
 - Expresses clear, consistent expectations for children to promote their well-being and involves them in rule-making
 - Values diversity of humans and expresses this through discussions, learning materials and experiences
 - Encourages talking/listening between adults and children throughout the day and appreciates the sound of chatter
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• Environment

- Children are involved in clean-up, putting materials away in designated places, using small brooms and dust pans, washing off tables
- Children feed themselves, help with meal service, and practice table manners
- Space for active play as well as for quiet activities and time alone
- Space to interact with peers and adults
- Shelves, activity areas, children’s belongings and cubbies labeled to promote language and sight reading
- Arranged to give children easy access to toys and materials
- Safe, healthy and carefully supervised

- **Program**

- Curriculum addresses individual interests and stages of development, and can change with the needs of the group
 - Curriculum allows children time for many self-initiated activities, as well as a few teacher-led group activities, with a balance of quiet and active activities
 - Television, video watching, and computer play are limited if used at all
 - Daily short group time for routine such as singing, sharing news, and a group activity
 - Quiet activities are provided for older children during nap time
 - Opportunities for field trips, exposure to new people and experiences, nature walks
 - Offers a variety of accessible, age-appropriate toys, materials and activities, including:
 - Rotating selection of books and magazines, children read to every day and stories discussed, children asked to tell and make books of their own stories and retell stories from their favorite books
 - Thick markers, crayons, and chalk with paper and envelopes for writing and drawing
 - Singing, teaching rhythmic songs, finger plays, rhyming songs or writing and drawing
 - Working with materials such as glue, collage materials, paint, crayons, clay or modeling dough, and safe scissors
 - Recognition of names and other sight words, letters, numbers, colors, shapes, and sizes are encouraged through adult modeling, matching and memory games, board and card games, sorting and sequencing activities, counting and measurement activities
 - Dramatic play materials developed and rotated according to children's interests including; realistic props of everyday experiences, dolls, dress up clothes, multicultural props, fantasy play props, puppets to act out stories from books and children's lives
 - Materials to develop hand muscles and eye-coordination such as lacing and fastening activities, bead stringing, Legos, puzzles, a variety of blocks, including unit blocks, with rotated props (realistic model, people, animals, vehicles, etc)
 - Cooking experiences and science and nature activities, such as: mixing colored water, making or melting ice, sprouting seeds in different environments, caring for and observing non-toxic plants and pets, using natural materials such as shells, rocks, or pinecones for activities such as classifying, sorting, counting, measuring, and crafts
 - Playing with sand, water and other sensory materials using varied pouring, measuring and mixing tools
 - Opportunities, twice daily, to: tricycle, play with balls and sports equipment, participate in simple non-competitive group games, dance and move in creative ways to music, or climb on safe equipment with padding beneath it.
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• SCHOOL-AGE

• Caregiver

- Children are treated respectfully and expected to treat others in kind
 - Positive guidance techniques are used with the children
 - Disagreements are settled through conflict resolution
 - Children are given the opportunity to share in the rule-making process
 - Caregivers are engaged in activities and conversation with children and youth
 - Caregiver is always present and available, yet respectful of child's personal space, privacy and independence.
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• Environment

- Quiet space is available for reading, homework, quiet games and winding down
 - Space for active play, indoor and outdoor, that is separate from quiet areas and younger children
 - Adequate materials and space for a variety of activities
 - Materials and program space reflect diversity
 - Space reflects the work and interests of children and youth
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• Program

- Provides a rich learning atmosphere that supports children's education but offers a change of pace from the structured school environment
 - Time is provided daily for reading, homework, quiet games, and winding down
 - Children are involved in planning and able to choose their own activities
 - Opportunities for older children to mentor younger children in physical and social skills, as well as academics
 - Opportunities to work on building Life Skills such as cooking, measuring, carpentry, sewing/mending, gardening, computing, budgeting money, shopping, etc
 - Minimal use of TV and videos, with age appropriate shows and films
 - Field trips offered, some of which count toward community service
 - Hobbies, interest clubs and time to "hang out" and talk with friends are offered
 - Offers a variety of accessible, age-appropriate toys, materials, and activities including
 - Puzzles, card & board games, Legos, Lincoln logs, blocks, erector set
 - Arts & crafts materials, art supplies, chalkboard, stapler, hole punch
 - Easy-reader picture books, chapter books, books for adults to read
 - Dress-ups and other props for theater/story time, puppets, dollhouse/dolls
 - Boom box, music, instruments, (harmonica, guitar, recorder, etc.)
 - Balls, bats, jump ropes, ring toss, beanbags, transportation toys
 - Nature and science activities (magnets, balance scales, magnifying glasses)
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Emergency Preparedness:

- Suggest that at some point parents will want to find out what plans the provider or director has for various types of emergencies such as severe weather, fire, environmental accidents, utility outages, and civil disasters.
- Suggest that parents ask the following questions:
 - Has the provider taken any emergency preparedness training?
 - What can I do to help plan for emergencies while my child is in care?
 - Does the provider have a current emergency plan ?

An Emergency Plan Should Include the Following:

- A plan for communicating with parents
 - New parent orientation on emergency preparations and regular re-orientation
 - Emergency card with parent phone numbers, including cell phone and numbers for alternate contacts, including out-of-state
 - Provider cell phone number
 - Information checked routinely to keep current and accurate
- An evacuation plan
 - Written plan posted and practiced monthly
 - Designated places, primary and back-up, to shelter and meet parents
 - Transportation arrangements
 - Ready-to-go pack for each child
 - Activities to occupy children
 - First Aid Kit with a 3-day supply of all necessary medications
- A shelter in place plan
 - Food (including formula for infants) and water provisions for 3 days
 - Extra seasonally appropriate clothing and shoes
 - Bedding, sleeping arrangements, comfort objects for children
 - Safe zone to take shelter
 - Battery powered radio or TV to access information
 - First Aid Kit with a 3-day supply of all necessary medications.