

Interviewing Providers: What to Ask Before You Choose

A YoungStar Guide for Families

Placing your child in another's care can be a difficult and emotional decision. Checking a program's objective YoungStar rating is one way to get peace of mind. Planning a visit to the providers you're considering is another. It's your chance to ask questions and make sure the child care program you choose has the qualities you value most. Here are a few simple tips to help you prepare.

Before Your Visit

Check youngstar.wi.gov

YoungStar's 5 Star rating system is a quick and easy way to compare child care providers in your community. You can also find in-depth information on each program you're considering, including its hours, location, any accreditations, its evaluation history and any violations it has received in the last two years.

Review the program's policies.

Every child care program should have a set of clear policies for handling everything from daily schedules and childhood illnesses to menu plans and discipline. These rules help families and staff work together to provide children with a safe place to learn and a consistent quality of care. Ask for a copy of the program's written policies and review it carefully.

Ask for references.

Talking to other families is a great way to find out if a child care program or provider is right for your family. Ask to speak with two or three families currently enrolled in the program you're considering, and don't be afraid to ask pointed questions.

Find out the program's children-to-teacher ratio.

It's important to know how much personal attention your child will receive—and how many friends he or she may make. The children-to-teacher ratio tells you the number of children who are in the care of a single teacher. Typically, classrooms get larger as children age. These guidelines from the American Association of Pediatrics are a good rule of thumb:

0-12 months	3 children : 1 teacher
13-35 months	4 children : 1 teacher
3 years	7 children : 1 teacher
4-5 years	8 children : 1 teacher
6-8 years	10 children : 1 teacher
9-12 years	12 children : 1 teacher

Using YoungStar Is Easy

Visit youngstar.wi.gov to compare child care providers and find helpful parenting advice.

Look for the **YoungStar rating window sticker or certificate** when you're interviewing providers.

Call **1-888-713-KIDS (5437)** to get personalized help from a local child care resource and referral specialist.

Want to Learn More?

At youngstar.wi.gov, parents can watch videos, download articles and find useful information on early childhood education, nutrition and more. You can even discover activities that encourage healthy brain development.

What to Ask While You're There

Finding the right child care program for your family isn't easy. But asking questions can help. Here are a few simple questions to get the conversation started:

Ask About the Program's Stars

YoungStar's 5 Star rating system gives parents a snapshot of each program's quality. It's an objective system that values: educated and well-trained staff; enriching learning experiences; professional business practices; and safe, healthy and nurturing environments. To find out how the program you're considering stacks up, consider questions like:

- When were you last evaluated by YoungStar?
- How many stars have you earned?
- What were the strong points in your evaluation?
- Did any parts of your program need improvement? What are you doing to improve?
- What should I know about your program that I wouldn't find in your YoungStar evaluation?

Get the Full Picture

A YoungStar rating is a quick and easy way to check a program's quality, but the rating can only tell parents so much. To see the full picture of any child care program, it's important for families to look beyond the stars. Here are a few questions to help you narrow down your child care options:

- How long have most teachers worked there?
- How well is your staff educated? Do they participate in any ongoing training?
- Do you have any accreditations?
- How do you keep parents informed and up to date?
- How can my family get engaged with your program?
- What is the daily schedule? Is it organized, with a good mix of active and quiet times?
- How do the children get fresh air and exercise? What types of off-site activities are available?
- What is the menu like? Do you work with a nutritionist? Who prepares the food?
- What happens if a child gets sick?
- How can I help make my child's experience the best it can be?

1-888-713-5437 (Toll-free) **711** (TTY)

youngstar.wi.gov



Wisconsin's Child Care Quality Rating & Improvement System