**Kevin’s Advice**

My name is Kevin Brackett and I’m the solicitor for the 16th circuit in York and Union counties, and I would like to talk with you a little bit about my experience and what I’ve seen in my job as it pertains to child care facilities and making sure that your children are safe in child care facilities, and try to sort of educate you, give you some idea and the benefit of my experience in this area.

Recently, in York county, we have had a spate of cases involving the death of some children in child care facilities, and while the issues that I’m going to talk about didn’t necessarily, weren’t necessarily the cause of the children’s deaths, in the course of investigating these cases, they have come to my attention and in my opinion is a public health issue that needs to be addressed. You need to, first and foremost, inspect this facility yourself. Is this a place you want to leave your child? Look around. Is it clean? Does it look like it’s well cared for? Are there any obvious safety concerns that are visible to your eye? Would you want your child, if this is a home facility, particularly, is this how your home looks? Are there dangerous items like cleaners and toxic chemicals and that sort of thing lying around? Sharp edges or are electrical outlets secured so kids can’t hurt themselves there? Is there playground equipment and toys and that sort of thing? Are they kept well and maintained? Are they secured in the sense that they have cushioning around them and a soft cushion along the bottom of them, in case the kids fall?

Making sure there are enough people in the facility to watch the children and that there aren’t too many children isn’t just a question of prudent placement of your children. It’s a question of life or death. It could very well mean the difference between somebody being there to help your child when they need the help or are they going to be so busy taking care of 3 other kids on the other side of the building that they don’t notice yours is in trouble?

You know, there are a lot of great child care facilities in South Carolina staffed with wonderful caring people who take really good care of these kids that they are charged with watching over, and those people who work in these facilities, they expect you to ask these questions, they expect you to wonder whether or not they’re going to take good care of your kids. They have kids themselves. They are asking these questions and they expect you to ask them, you know, and they respect you for being a concerned parent. They’re not going to take it hard or they’re not going to take offense. The ones that are proud of how well they run are proud to tell you about it.

Look. Listen. Ask. Know before they go. Make sure before your child if left in the care of someone else that where they are being left is a safe environment where they are going to be able to adequately look after them and supervise their activity and keep them safe.