



# SELECTING THE RIGHT CHILD CARE PROVIDER: Three Things Every Child Deserves

Finding high quality child care in your child's early, most impressionable years is critical to brain development and future success. But what makes a quality program?

- 1 HEALTH & SAFETY** – Programs that are licensed, registered or that participate in ABC Quality are routinely visited by DSS professionals who assess health and safety standards.
- 2 INTERACTIONS** – Teachers respond to and engage children in positive, meaningful and playful interactions throughout the day. Their interactions are nurturing, sensitive, responsive and consistent.
- 3 LEARNING ENVIRONMENT** – Teachers provide children with a stimulating learning environment with developmentally appropriate activities that build on children's interests and encourage curiosity, exploration and problem solving.

To legally operate in SC, child care providers must be licensed, registered or exempt. Always ask if a program you are considering is licensed, registered or exempt and expect to see evidence of their status. Remember a license, while important, is not the only indication of quality.

ABC Quality is a voluntary rating and improvement program that helps SC parents find high quality child care. Providers who participate in our program receive an ABC Quality rating consistent with their commitment to provide higher quality experiences.

ABC Quality staff monitor and inspect participating providers to ensure adherence to program standards. Our metrics are based on established child care best practices. We evaluate for safety, cleanliness, the caliber of activities and program structure, positive interactions between children and staff, well-trained and educated caregivers, and other hallmarks of high quality.

**Visit [ABCQuality.org](https://www.abcquality.org) to learn more about our quality criteria. When you talk to a potential child care provider, be sure to ask the following questions:**

- Are you registered or licensed? (look for posted current status)
- Do you participate in ABC Quality?
- What types of early childhood training do you require of the teachers you hire?  
Do teachers working with infants have specific training for this age group?
- What would an average day in your program look like for my child? How much time outside will s/he spend?
- Do you post your meal plans? Where can I find that information?
- How do teachers plan learning activities for my child's class?
- What tools do you use to measure the growth and development of my child?  
How will you inform me of that progress?
- Which staff-to-child ratios do you use? (see recommended ratios below)

**Best Staff-to-Child Ratios**

Age	Maximum Ratio	Group Size
0–2 years	1:5	10
2–3 years	1:7	14
3–4 years	1:11	22
4–5 years	1:13	26
5–6 years	1:15	30
6–9 years	1:18	36
9–12 years	1:20	40

**Good Staff-to-Child Ratios**

Age	Maximum Ratio	Group Size
0–1 years	1:5	N/A
1–2 years	1:6	N/A
2–3 years	1:8	N/A
3–4 years	1:12	N/A
4–5 years	1:17	N/A
5–6 years	1:20	N/A
6–12 years	1:23	N/A