

Quality child cares makes a difference



By Tina Barna

Research shows that parents who know their children are being cared for in a safe and healthy environment are better able to perform on the job. This research is not a surprise to any parent who has looked for quality child care for their child. In response to many recent calls to Choices for Children for information and referral assistance, here are some basics to finding quality child care.

The state Department of Social Service, Community Care Licensing Division is charged with the task of inspecting and licensing Family Child Care Homes and Child Care Centers. In order to do this, they follow a set of clearly defined regulations that are meant to keep children safe and free from harm. An abbreviated list from the Child Care Center Self Evaluation form has the following:

â€¢ Criminal Record Clearances and Child Abuse Index checks done for ALL staff

â€¢ Children are visually supervised at all times; volunteers must be supervised by a teacher

â€¢ Staff to child ratios are met at all times

â€¢ Teachers, aides and the director all meet mandated qualifications

â€¢ The maximum capacity for the facility is adhered to at all times

â€¢ Childrenâ€™s personal rights are protected â€” No corporal punishment or excessive time out

â€¢ The facility must be in good repair and no hazards or dangerous materials are accessible

â€¢ CPR and First Aid cards are up to date

â€¢ Have and maintain a Emergency Disaster Plan with a current roster of all children in care

â€¢ Post all parent notification requirements for any Type A deficiency or citation

This list is only a small example of an exhaustive set of regulations that all FCCHâ€™s and centers must follow in order to meet the state licensing mandate. The goal is to protect our most vulnerable population; our children. Do these regulations equate to quality? The most these regulations can do is ensure the health and safety of children. Quality is much bigger than just making sure the facility meets the minimum requirements. Beyond the basic health and safety requirements, the following are a list of things to look for that identifies a FCCH or Child Care Center striving for a quality environment for our children:

â€¢ Lower child to teacher ratios â€” the facility works to include parent volunteers or additional aides

â€¢ An environment rich in culturally sensitive materials

â€¢ Parents are encouraged to participate

â€¢ Specific age appropriate activities

â€¢ A plethora of manipulatives and learning materials for the child to choose

â€¢ Highly educated staff in Early Childhood Education and Development

â€¢ Staff who clearly enjoy working with children

â€¢ A warm and inviting atmosphere

â€¢ Clear and consistent communication with the parent about the childâ€™s day

â€¢ Childrenâ€™s continued growth and development monitored through accepted tools such as ECRS and Desired Results

â€¢ NAEYC accreditation

It is essential parents stay involved and active in their childâ€™s education â€” starting with the earliest of years. Children must first be safe and secure in order to grow and learn. If you would like more information or would like to check out any of our FREE resources including videos, resource books or to read the licensing regulations, please call or stop by our office. We are here to assist you.

Tina Barna is director of Choices For Children a child care resource and referral agency.