

Family Living Focus

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Choosing a suitable day care program for your infant, toddler, or elementary-age child can be a real challenge. If this is the first time that you have needed to find child care, as it is for my husband and I, you may feel that you're facing one of the most frightening tasks of your life. You are not alone.

With the rise of two-paycheck and single-parent households, child care is in heavier demand than ever before. Parents are desperately seeking places to go to find stable, nurturing, convenient, and affordable child care. What are some of the actions that you can take to find a provider that you and your child will feel comfortable with? Let me share a few ideas for ways that you can begin to explore child care options in your community.

The first step is to consider what types of child care options are available. Child care comes in many forms, ranging from established child care centers to family day care homes, group day care homes, or child care offered by friends and relatives. All forms of care offer their own advantages and disadvantages, so it is important to weigh each option carefully

and make a selection based on your own needs.

People and organizations that may be helpful to you in your search for child care include relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers, churches, schools, YWCA's, parenting groups, health and welfare offices, cooperative extension offices, employment services or local colleges. Other resources may include classified sections in local newspapers or community bulletin boards.

Making the right choice once you have narrowed your options is a very important decision for you and your child. According to Dr. James Van Horn, associate professor of family sociology at Penn State, parents should select a day care program much as they would purchase any other service. They should compare the different services available, visit day care centers while children are there, talk to the employees and check references.

"The last thing a parent should do is make a decision in a rush," Van Horn says. "It's better to make temporary arrangements while you search for a permanent day care program than to place a child in the first available pro-

gram."

Some important questions that you may want to ask a potential provider include the following:

- Are you registered with the State or affiliated with an association or agency?
 - What kind of experience do you have with children? How long have you been providing care? What sort of training or education do you have?
 - How many children are you caring for now and what are their ages? How many children will you care for at any one time?
 - What are the hours that you provide care? Are these hours flexible?
 - What are your rates? How and when are payments made? Do you pay when your child is sick or when you take a vacation? When are you closed?
 - What is the daily schedule? Do children go outside? Is there a nap time? What kinds of educational activities do you provide? Do children watch TV and if so, what programs may they watch?
 - Are meals and snacks provided? Can arrangements be made for my child's special feeding needs?
 - What is the policy for sick children? Have you had training in First Aid and CPR? Do you have a safety plan to follow in case of emergencies?
 - May I visit the home at any time when my child is there? (the answer should be yes).
 - How do you discipline children? What are your rules?
- In addition to asking questions, observations can be made of the facility or home of the child care provider. Some things to observe include the cleanliness and comfort of the facility, space allocations, safety and age-appropriate-

ness of equipment and toys, and the general organization of the feeding, sleeping, and activity schedules in the home or center. Observations of the caregiver's interactions with children should be observed and child-staff ratios considered. Warning signals should go off immediately for caregivers who appear to be unresponsive to children's needs, easily irritated or overwhelmed by their caregiving responsibilities.

The process of exploring child care options and eventually arriving at a decision about the most appropriate form of care for your child is sure to leave you caught in a rather unpleasant battle of conflicting emotions. Feelings of anticipation about finding a quality provider or about being able to re-

turn to work may be mixed with less desirable emotions of doubt, insecurity and guilt over leaving your child in someone else's care. While such emotions are quite normal, your child will experience the best adjustment when you demonstrate confidence in your decision, share a communicative relationship with your caregiver, and make plenty of time to share in quality activities with your child.

While my need for a child care provider will not come until March of next year, I'm prepared to begin exploring my options now. With a little advance planning, I'm looking forward to replacing my anxiety and insecurity with confidence and satisfaction in my chosen caregiver.



Farm Women Societies

Lebanon Society 20

Lebanon Farm Women Group #20 met at the home of Christine Williams who read devotions followed by the Lord's prayer and salute to the flag.

The program was about Special Puppies by Sandy Smith and her daughter Alice who brought their dogs. They told about raising and training them for about a year, then giving them back for more training to become Seeing Eye dogs for the blind.

Twelve members answered roll call to the question Do you have a

dog? 1 guest attended.

A report was given on the FFA food stand at the fairgrounds.

The county convention will be held at the Quality Inn on Oct. 12.

Vera Gross, Pat Ziegler, Sarah Funck and Mae Stamm helped in the kitchen at the Lebanon Area Fair. Marion Maulfair and Carol Heagy helped in the dairy barn.

The group donated \$25 to the Seeing Eye Foundation.

The next meeting will be with Elaine Shuey, program is Bingo Night.

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