

## Choosing Childcare for Your Baby

When deciding on childcare for their infants, many parents struggle with questions about quality. Recent childcare research shows that the setting (in-home, family or center) matters less than what happens within that setting. Babies need to be able to form a trusting relationship with providers that allows an emotional bond to form. Low provider-to-child ratios are key. Equally important are questions on what staff salaries and benefits are like. Low pay is responsible for rampant turnover within the childcare industry, thus making it harder for your baby to build a comfortable bond with his or her caregiver(s).

Here are some tips to keep in mind when investigating childcare options for your baby:

- **Visit the daycare site before enrolling your child.** Visit at times when you can observe the interactions of children with each other and with adults.
- **Spend some time observing the infant room.** Visit several times to judge how caregivers respond to tears or times of stress.
- **See if infants are allowed to have their naps when it feels right for them.** Unlike older children, babies have a harder time being treated as part of a group and need to follow their own inner schedules.
- **Make sure providers are interacting with babies.** According to a study by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, “the amount of language that is directed at the child in childcare is an important component of quality provider-child interaction.”
- **Ask how care providers handle babies’ special needs,** such as food allergies or attachment to a pacifier.
- **Check the qualifications and credentials of the caregivers.** Degrees in early childhood education and accreditation from the National Association for Family Child Care and the National Association for the Education of Young Children provide good starting points.
- **Get names of parents whose children have attended** or are attending and call them.

## **Resources**

[Great Start Connect](#) - Your destination for child care and preschool resources in Michigan

*-- Furnished by the Ingham Great Start Collaborative*