

If you are in the state of Illinois, you can visit <https://sunshine.dcf.illinois.gov> and provide a provider's name and address to verify that they are licensed and to check for any violations against a provider you may be interested in. In the State of Illinois, it is illegal to provide care for more than 3 children under the age of 12, including your own children.

The Provider:

1. What early childhood education/training have you had?
2. How long have you been providing child care?
3. How long do you expect to continue providing child care?
4. Do you continue to take trainings/classes? What topics?
5. Why did you start a child care business?
6. What do you find most rewarding about providing child care? The most challenging?
7. What is your philosophy on child care?
8. How do you comfort the children?
9. What are the discipline guidelines?
10. Do you have a developmentally appropriate approach to learning?
11. How do you handle/balance stress in your life?
12. Tell me about a time you had to deal with an emergency.
13. What do you like to do for fun?
14. Would you allow me to run a Department of Motor Vehicle check?

Enrollment:

1. Do you have room for my child?
2. Do you have a waiting list process?
3. Is/are there deposit/enrollment/registration fees and if so, how much are they?
4. How many children would you like to have enrolled in total?
5. What ages of children do you currently have enrolled?
6. Can I bring my child/ren for a pre-enrollment visit?
7. What supplies will I need to supply? Extra clothing? Outdoor clothing? Diapers? Wipes? Etc.
8. What paperwork is needed to enroll my child/ren?

Business Requirements:

1. Are you licensed with the (Illinois Department of Children and Family Services)? (It's ok to ask for proof)
2. How long have you been licensed?
3. How often are you monitored/inspected? Are they unannounced and what happens at an inspection?
4. What violations have you had against your license?
5. Do you have any current violations against your license?
6. What is your license capacity?
7. Do you claim your income on your taxes?
8. When will you provide me with your FEIN number?

Contract & Policies:

1. What are your hours of operation?
2. What is your rate? Is that per week? Per day? Per hour?
3. What do I do to notify you and how much will I be charged if I am going to be late at the end of the day?
4. What are your policies/rates if I occasionally must start work early or stay late?
5. Do you have a contract? Policies? Sickness Policies?
6. My vacation/time off pay – do I pay you when my child is absent?
7. Provider's vacation time – do I pay all or part of your pay when you are on vacation? How many weeks per year do you take off and how much notice will I receive?
8. What is your holiday schedule?
9. What other days are you closed? Are sick/personal days paid? How will I be informed and how much notice will I receive if you are taking a sick/personal day/s?
10. Do you offer a sibling discount? If so, how much?
11. When is payment expected?
12. Who provides back-up care?
13. What will your provider do if she or her own children are sick? Will you still bring your child? Will you still be charged if your provider or your provider's children are sick and you don't want to bring your child/ren?
14. Can I drop in, unannounced during the day, providing my child/ren are in care?

Meals:

1. Are you on a food program?
2. What meals are served and when? (Ask to see a week's worth of menus)
3. Is there any food restrictions on items brought from home?
4. Can I bring snacks/meals from home? Store bought?
5. How would you respond if my child refused to eat a meal you prepared for them?
6. How do you handle picky eaters?

Routines/Activities:

1. What does a typical day look like?
2. Are the basic routines (eating, napping) consistent?
3. Is your schedule flexible with activities?
4. What activities are offered?
5. Is there enough unstructured free-play time offered?
6. How often do the children go outside and for how long?
7. What weather conditions warrants staying inside?
8. If your child is an infant, will the infant go outside everyday (weather permitting) with the other children? How will this be handled?
9. What are the strengths of your program? Weakness?

Health & Safety:

1. Do you have CPR/First-Aid training? Ask to see the certificate, check the dates to make sure they are current.
2. Is the house/yard child-proofed sufficiently? Ask to look around.

3. How will they handle a medical emergency? (i.e. If someone's child needs to be taken by ambulance)
4. How will they handle a weather emergency? Ask about their tornado drill plan.
5. What is their hazard plan for a fire/electrical outage/flooding emergency? Ask how often and how do they practice fire drills?
6. Is the yard fenced? How is safety maintained if it isn't?
7. Are there guns in the house? If so, how are they kept locked up?
8. Is there any smoking in the home, even after child care hours?
9. Must my child be immunized to attend?
10. What if my child needs medication during the day?
11. What are your toilet training policies?
12. Do you wash your hands after changing diapers and before feeding the children?
13. Are older children taught to wash their hands after using the toilet and before eating?
14. Are indoor and outdoor play areas childproofed and escape-proof?
15. Are the children ever left unattended? Why? How is their safety safeguarded?
16. Do you have a sign-in and sign-out sheet?
17. Are the doors secure so strangers can't just walk in?
18. What is your release policy? Who may pick up my child?
19. Do you receive personal visitors (not affiliated with the daycare business) during the day?
20. Are appropriate safety measures (fire extinguisher, first aid kit, safety gates, safety plugs for Electrical outlets, etc.) in place?
21. Who will be allowed to handle your children? It is ok to be specific and put in writing who is and isn't allowed to handle your child if there are concerns (i.e. other child care children, other parents etc.) It is ok to ask/demand that no one under the age of 18 and/or on your license be allowed to pick up your child/ren up.
22. Is the handwashing water temperature below 115 degrees?
23. Do you practice monthly tornado and fire drills?

The Environment:

1. Do they have adequate space for all the children there? Is there enough safe space for baby to explore when they start to crawl safely without being knocked down by the older kids?
2. Is the place clean and pleasant?
3. How often are the toys cleaned and replaced?
4. Is the furniture sturdy and secured to the walls?
5. Is the environment well lit?
6. Is the temperature appropriate for the season?

Transportation:

1. Do you have the proper and sufficient liability insurance for the business? (it's ok to ask to see proof)
2. Do you provide transportation to school/preschool? If so, how many times a day? Every day? Infrequently?
3. If you transport the children, how will I be informed of this? (Note - It is illegal to leave anyone's children in the car while they take the other child/ren in. Ask how they handle this if they do. Lawfully, parents MUST supply their child's own car seat.
4. Do you have a current, valid driver's license? (ask to see)
5. Do you have proper insurance on your vehicle? (ask for proof)

Animals:

1. Are there any animals in the home? Which kind?
2. Are the animals' shots up to date? (Ask to see proof)
3. How are the animals around the children?
4. What are the guidelines for handling/not handling the pet/s?

Napping:

1. What will my child sleep on/in? (If they are using their own family's beds for napping, it is DCFS regulation that each child has their own separate bedding for naps: sheets, blankets, pillows.)
2. Where do the children sleep and how will they be monitored?
3. What if my child doesn't nap, what will s/he do during nap time?
4. Do you place babies on their back to sleep and follow other safe sleeping practices to reduce the risk of SIDS?

Infant Care:

1. Does each baby have her own crib/pack and play?
2. Are appropriate safety and prevention measures in place?
3. Are babies held when fed?
4. How often are they held and rocked?
5. Are babies regularly played with, cuddled, taken outdoors?
6. What is your approach to soothing a crying baby?
7. How frequent are diaper changes?
8. Will you store breast milk and feed it to my baby?
9. How often do babies get tummy time?
10. Be sure to find out how much experience the child care provider has with infants. Are they certified in infant CPR and first aid?
11. Get an understanding of what the caregiver knows about infant development. This is important because the daycare provider must be able to provide age and interest level appropriate activities and expert, loving care.
12. It is important to know your daycare provider's stance on nurturing and stimulating infants.
13. Find out how the caregivers will interact with the infants and how responsive they will be to each child.
14. Get information about the daycare provider's schedules for infants.
15. Determine if the environment is clean and safe.
16. It is important to know what type of equipment and materials are available for infants.
17. Consider how the daycare provider communicates with parents as well as what their expectations are of parents.
18. How are bottles and formula stored? Are there seat belts on high chairs and infant seats?
19. Are babies held during feeding? Are babies out of the crib when awake?
20. Are emergency exits clearly marked? How often are smoke detectors checked?
21. How often are changing tables disinfected?
22. Will my baby have his or her own bed?
23. Are there quiet areas for babies to sit and observe?
24. How is the cleanliness of the kitchen?
25. What stimulating activities are available for babies?

Substitutes/Assistants:

1. Do you have assistants or substitutes and how will I be informed if a substitute or assistant is providing care?
2. What are your assistants training/education?
3. Do they get breaks during the day?
4. How long do assistants work for you, on average?
5. Do the assistants receive any benefits?
6. How do you screen your assistants and backup providers?
7. Do you do background checks on them before hiring?

Miscellaneous:

1. How much media are the kids exposed to on any given day? Video games, cartoons, computer?
2. How will the provider communicate to you about your child's day – verbally, written, emails, calls etc?
3. Do you have the name and numbers of references?
4. What do you expect of me as a parent?
5. Do you encourage visits from parents? Why or why not?
6. Do you have a pool and/or hot tub? How is the safety of the children safeguarded while around these?
7. Do you do conferences? If so, how often?

PLEASE CHOOSE LEGAL CHILD CARE.
PLEASE CHOOSE CHILD CARE WISELY.
MORE IMPORTANTLY, PLEASE MONITOR YOUR CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENT
TO ENSURE IT REMAINS SAFE AND OF GOOD QUALITY.