

Identifying Family Child Care Providers

Even the most caring, skilled, and professional family child care providers may not be familiar with all of the *Head Start Program Performance Standards*. As you approach partnering with Family Child Care providers, your goal is to identify providers who are ready, willing and able to work with you to meet the *Standards*. Use interviews, site visits, background and reference checks and observations to inform your choices. If providers are already licensed, you might also interview the State Licensing Representative to learn about the history in services or reported concerns. Because your community program will be unique, we cannot offer a comprehensive screening tool for providers. As you consider your program, and the needs and resources of the families in your community, you will identify qualities and characteristics that will be important for you to look for in providers. As a beginning, consider the following questions in your identification process:

Experience:

What is the provider's experience in providing family child care?
Has s/he served a variety of families, including low-income families?
What is the professional background of this provider?
What other experiences has s/he had with young children and their families?
What curriculum, if any, does the provider use? If the provider doesn't currently use a curriculum, is s/he willing to begin using one, and to attend training on implementing an appropriate curriculum?

Environment:

Is the environment safe?
Does it provide "sufficient indoor and outdoor space?"
Is this a "child-friendly" environment where children can relax and explore?
Would this space accommodate children with disabilities affecting mobility?
Are there/what are the potential hazards in the environment?
Is there evidence of smoking in the home?
Where is the program located in relation to where the families you serve live?
Is this a licensed or accredited facility?



Interactions:

How would you describe the provider's interactions with you?

If you have an opportunity to observe him/her with children, consider how comfortable children and families seem with the provider. How do you know?

How does the provider handle conflict?

How does s/he encourage children and families to interact with him/her?

Watch the provider with a nonverbal infant. Does s/he seem to read and respond to the baby's cues? How do you know?

Relationships with Families:

Is the provider welcoming and pleasant to families?

How does the provider share information with families? What kind of information? How frequently?

How are families invited to share information with the provider? How frequently?

In conversations with families and interviews with you, how does s/he demonstrate respect and openness to families?

In his/her experience, do families send second children to his or her care?

How does s/he describe his or her approach to working with families?

Commitment:

What is this provider's goal in working with your Head Start program?

Does s/he return your messages?

Is the provider already licensed or certified (or seeking licensure or certification) with the state (if applicable)?

Does s/he have a CDA or formal education or degrees in work with young children and their families?

Is s/he accredited or working toward accreditation with the National Association of Family Child Care?

Is s/he willing to further their education via a CDA or degree?

How does s/he understand what the Head Start program can provide to him or her?

Other:

Is the provider willing and able to provide flexible hours? If so, what does "flexible" mean for him or her?

Will the family child care provider's own children be served in the home? If so, how old are they? How does the provider plan to serve other children at the same time s/he is serving his or her own?

Does this provider speak the language of families you serve?

Does s/he know the culture of the families you serve?

Possible resource: Harms, Thelma, Debbie Cryer and Richard Clifford. 2007. *Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale*. New York: Teachers College Press.