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# How to Choose a School-Age Program

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As you think about after school care, make visits, ask questions, then decide. Taking the time and energy to choose the right program is a necessary part of selecting a successful environment for your child.

Our referral gives you somewhere to start, but the responsibility for your child's safety and well being is yours. Group size, child/adult ratio, teacher/counselor experience, training and education, facility safety, and family involvement are some of the quality indicators you might consider in choosing a program. Ask plenty of questions and make sure you are comfortable with the staff and facilities before making your final decision.

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## Phone Interview Questions

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Before you schedule a site visit, you may want to ask:

- If the program location is not at the school where your child is enrolled, who will provide transportation?
- How much do you charge? (hour, day or week)
- Do I pay for days my child is sick? On vacation?
- Is there an extra fee if I am late picking up my child?
- Who supplies the food? What foods are served?
- Is there a special rate for 2 or more children from the same family?
- How do the children in care spend their time? Is homework help provided?
- Do you take the children on any field trips? Are parents notified in advance?
- Are parents welcome to stop in to visit their children at any time? To participate in activities?
- How often do you communicate with parents?
- How many children are enrolled in the program? What is your limit? Will my child interact with children in different class levels?
- How many children and adults will be in my child's classroom?
- Are your teachers/counselors certified in any way?
- How long has each of your teachers been with the program?

Child Development Council  
609 W. Clinton St.  
Ithaca NY 14850  
(607) 273-0259  
[www.childdevelopmentcouncil.org](http://www.childdevelopmentcouncil.org)

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## Site Visits

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When you decide to visit a program, bring your child to the interview. Allow at least an hour, planning to go when your child is not hungry or sleepy. Observe how the teachers and your child interact. Ask for a tour of the indoor and outdoor areas used for care. Observe other classrooms and teachers with all the children.

**If you are unable to keep your appointment, call the program to cancel!**

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## Health and Safety Indicators

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Most schools in the area have programs available to help parents continue working after the school day lets out. School-age programs not operated by the school must be registered. They are required to meet minimal Health and Safety requirements to be in compliance with regulations. Background checks on all staff who will be alone with children are required. Regulations pertaining to school-age child care can be viewed on the internet at:

[http://ocfs.state.ny.us/main/childcare/daycare\\_regs.asp](http://ocfs.state.ny.us/main/childcare/daycare_regs.asp)

Minimum requirements are outlined in regulation, however the responsibility for your child's safety and well being is yours.

When visiting a program, note the environment and safety precautions such as smoke detectors, safe exits, etc. Requirements are clear, but minimal, your feeling of health and safety is subjective. You need to take the time to ask yourself:

- Is this an environment in which I want to leave my child?
- What skills, warmth and knowledge does the counselor possess so I feel comfortable leaving my child?
- Does my child seem to like the staff?
- Does the counselor try to involve my child in activities with the other children?
- Do the children mix well together?
- How much time is allowed for homework? Will academic help be available for my child?

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## How many children and adults might I see in a School Age Child Care Program?

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### NYS Regulation 414-1.8 Supervision of Children

(a) School-age child care programs must employ or have available staff who will promote the physical, intellectual, social, cultural and emotional well-being of the children.

(b) The school-age child care program must provide supervision of the staff responsible for the care of children. Workloads and assignments must be arranged to provide consistency of care to children and to allow staff to fulfill their respective responsibilities.

(c) Whenever the school-age child care program is in operation and the director is away from the premises, there must be a person designated to act on behalf of the director.

(d) Children cannot be left without competent direct supervision at any time.

(1) No person other than a director, head of group or assistant to the head of group may supervise a group independently even for brief periods of time, except in an emergency. No person under 18 years of age may be left alone to supervise a group of children at any time including in an emergency.

(2) The minimum age of a staff person is 16 years.

(3) A person who is qualified to perform the duties of an absent staff member must be provided when needed to comply with the applicable staff/child ratios.

(e) When a school-age child care program is in operation, an adequate number of qualified staff must be on duty to protect the health and safety of the children in care. The minimum ratios of staff to children are illustrated in the ratio chart at the right.

(f) When a school-age child care program cares for children in groups including children both over and under 10 years of age, the staff/child ratio used must be that ratio applicable to the youngest child in the group.

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## Minimum Staff/Child Ratios

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AGE OF CHILDREN	STAFF/CHILD MAXIMUM RATIO(*)	GROUP SIZE(**)
Through 9 years	1:10	20
10-12 years	1:15	30

(\*) Staff/child ratio refers to the maximum number of children per staff person.

(\*\*) Group size refers to the number of children cared for together as a unit. Group size is used to determine the minimum staff/child ratio based upon the age of the children in the group.

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## How much education and training do child care teachers need?

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The program director and each employee must complete training every two years. The number of hours required are prorated to the number of hours worked per week. Fifteen hours of training must be received during the first six months of the program's first year of registration or during the person's first six months of employment by the program. Training must address the following topic areas:

- Principles of Child Development
- Nutrition & Health
- Program Development
- Safety & Security
- Business Record Maintenance & Management
- Child Abuse & Maltreatment Identification & Prevention
- Statutes & Regulations Pertaining to Child Day Care
- Statutes & Regulations Pertaining to Child Abuse & Maltreatment
- Shaken Baby Syndrome

For a copy of NYS child care regulations and/or more information on selecting child care call the Child Development Council or visit the NYS Office of Children and Family Services website at [www.ocfs.state.ny.us](http://www.ocfs.state.ny.us)

Call the Child Development Council at (607) 273-0259 with concerns about a School-Age Child Care program or for a history of any child care program's compliance with regulations.

To report child abuse and neglect call 1-800-342-3720.