

Selecting Summer Care for School-Age Children: A Quality Checklist



WHEN IT'S TIME TO SELECT SUMMER CARE FOR SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN, there are many factors to consider. Use this checklist of questions as a guide for ensuring that you and your child have a safe and productive summer! Take time to learn about each summer care program you are considering. Many options exist, including school-based programs, parks & recreation, churches, youth service agencies, family child care homes, specialty camps, child care centers, etc. Make sure your decision is a **QUALITY** decision for you and your child.

What to look for when selecting a summer camp or program:

- What are the program's health, safety and nutrition policies and procedures?**
Ask about the sign-in/sign-out policies, medication policy, discipline policy, lifeguard certification/water safety policy, field trip & transportation policies, handling of sick children, and missing children policy. Ask if the program follows any established nutritional guidelines. Ask if their policies are in writing and if their facility meets local and state legal requirements.
- Is staff screened?**
Has the owner/operator/director of the program been fingerprinted through the FBI as required by law? Has the camp conducted a check of local law enforcement records or a statewide criminal correspondence check through the Florida Department of Law Enforcement for all staff? What additional screening methods does the program use?
- What is the staff/child ratio and group size of the program?**
Florida's maximum staff-to-child ratio for school-age children is 1-to-25. National quality standards recommend between 1-to-8 and 1-to-15 for children age 5-teens, and group sizes no larger than 30.
- Is staff well-trained?**
Ask about staff experience and education in early childhood/school-age care, recreation, serving children with special needs, CPR/First Aid/Lifeguarding and if appropriately licensed when transporting children.
- Is the program licensed or accredited?**
Summer programs are not required to be licensed or accredited. Licensure and accreditation ensure that basic health and safety standards are met. Accreditation often requires additional quality standards.
 - Are parents welcome to visit at all times? Are family activities offered?**
Programs should be accessible and welcoming to parents and families at all times.
 - Is there a daily lesson plan?**
Ask to review a typical lesson plan. Quality programs provide more than continuous free play. Plans should be consistent with the philosophy of the program and should include indoor, outdoor, quiet, active, staff-planned, child-initiated and free choice activities.
 - Is the facility adequate for the number of children enrolled?**
Is there enough room for all program activities? Outdoor programs should include indoor or sheltered areas for resting, respite from the sun and for bad weather days.
 - What are the hours of operation, fees and payment procedures?**
Do drop off and pick up hours and procedures ensure that your child is receiving proper adult supervision? Are there fees for enrollment, special activities, late pickups or late payments?

For information on summer care options in your area, contact your local **Child Care Resource and Referral Agency**



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