

# Your child's future: Choosing quality child care

New research on brain development shows that babies are born with an "unfinished" brain. The parts of the brain that handle thinking, remembering, emotions and social behaviors are very undeveloped at birth.

The brain's growth is affected by early experiences with both parents and other caregivers. The quality of non-parental care is measured by the same indicators as care by mothers and fathers: warm, responsive, consistent caregiving attentive to the needs of individual children.

Recent research shows that the quality of child care has a lasting impact on children's well-being and ability to learn. Children in poor quality child care lag behind their peers in language and reading skills and display more aggression toward other children and adults.

The quality of child care matters. Babies who are held, talked to, sung to and read to simply do better later in school.

In other words, you and your child care provider influence your child's brain structure and shape learning, thinking and behavior for life.

Here are some tips for choosing quality child care, courtesy of the Nurturing Center in Kalispell:

■ During a preliminary visit to the home, ask the child care provider:

- Is the home registered?
- How many and what ages are the children cared for in the home?
- Are nutritious meals and snacks provided?
- How much is the TV on? What programs do the children watch?
- What is the typical daily schedule for the children?
- What is the provider's philosophy regarding toilet training?

■ Does the child care provider:

- Appear to be warm, friendly and enjoy being with children?
- Treat each child as an individual with a different personality and different capabilities?
- Accept and respect your family and cultural values?
- Spend a reasonable portion of the day doing planned activities with the children?

■ Are there opportunities for the children to:

- Play with other children? Do children appear to be relaxed, happy and playing cooperatively?
- Receive individual attention?

Participate in activities which are suited to their development levels?

■ Do you feel:

- This setting can become a "home away from home" for your child?
- This arrangement will contribute positively to your child's total well-being?

*The information in this article is provided by the Nurturing Center. For more information, contact the center by calling 756-1414 or stop by 146 Third Ave. W. in Kalispell.*

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