

Choosing Safe Child Care

There *IS* someone who can give your children the care, understanding and nurturing that you want for them. Learning how to recognize that "someone" is the first step toward ensuring that they receive the best possible care. This could be a long process, so start early. When looking for child care there are three choices: licensed day care centres, agency home child care and unlicensed home child care. Licensed day care centres must be annually inspected in order for the license to be renewed. Agency home child care providers are visited on a more regular basis and receive support from Home Child Care staff. However, it is estimated that 80% of Canada's child care spaces are provided by unlicensed caregivers. By law, the only requirements in these homes, is that there can be no more than 5 children in care (excluding the caregiver's own). There is no inspection, no screening process and no requirement for formal training. This leaves it up to the parents to ensure that they are leaving their children in a safe environment.

Here are some factors which should affect your child care decision:

General

- Are there 5 children or less?
- Receive and check references (preferably from parents of children currently in care).
- Do unannounced spot checks.
- What is the "ill child" policy?
- Agree upon discipline methods.
- Does the caregiver have full liability insurance?

Setting - Indoor

Is the home clean, bright and well-

Meals

- Are menus, special diets and allergies posted?
- Are hard or round foods grated or cut into thin strips?
- Does highchair have a safety strap and a wide stable base?
- Is highchair located away from appliances, windows, walls and other furniture?

Bathroom

Is the hot water temperature set below 54°C?

Are all medicines, cosmetics, cleaning

maintained?

Is there space for safe, active play above ground?

Is furniture free of sharp edges, splinters or pinch points?

Is baby equipment in good repair and does it meet current standards?

Are there safety gates at the top and bottom of all stairs?

Are stairs well lit and do they have handrails?

Are windows shatter resistant and inaccessible to climbing toddlers?

Are all poisonous and hazardous materials locked away?

Are plants nontoxic?

Are all electrical, drapery, appliance cords fastened out of reach?

Are electrical outlets covered?

Are there working smoke detectors on each level?

Are fire extinguishers available and serviced?

Are workshop and laundry areas inaccessible to young children?

Setting - Outdoor

Is the area fenced?

Is the area free of hazardous materials and plants?

Are gardening tools and chemicals

products and appliances locked away?

Are platforms or stools stable?

Toys

Are all toys and play equipment age-appropriate?

Are toys clean and in good repair? The toy box lid should be spring-loaded? Are toys stored on sturdy shelves?

Are craft supplies safe and nontoxic?

Safety Behaviours

Are safety straps on highchairs, change tables, etc. used everytime?

Walkers are dangerous and should not be used.

Are children directly supervised, especially when playing with toys with small parts, eating, in the bathroom or outdoors?

Is a properly installed, approved car seat used for outings?

Are matches and lighters stored out of a child's reach?

Is there a separate diapering area, away from food?

Is a regular maintenance check done on all child-related equipment and toys?

Emergency Procedures

Does the caregiver have a current first

locked away?

Is play equipment safe and in good repair?

Is the sandbox covered, and is the sand changed each year?

Sleeping

Do young children sleep only in a crib that meets standards as of October 1/86 or later?

Are crib components in good condition?

Is the crib or bed placed away from other furniture, windows, doors, and blind cords?

Is there a nursery monitor?

aid certificate?

Is the caregiver trained in infant CPR (updated yearly)?

Is there a well-stocked, first aid kit accessible to adults but not children?

Are emergency numbers posted by each telephone?

Are parent contact numbers posted?

Is there Syrup of Ipecac at hand (used only on direction of Poison Control)? Is a fire drill practised monthly?

Child Safety Also Means Child Abuse Prevention

Written by Gillian Williams of the Children's Aid Society.
THE SOCIETY'S MANDATE IS TO PROTECT CHILDREN AND TO STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES.

Often when we hear the term "child safety", visions of bicycle helmets, child car seats, and crossing guards come quickly to mind. We think of devices to protect children from the dangers of unforeseen accidents. For others, like the staff, foster parents and volunteers of the Peel Children's Aid Society (Peel CAS), child safety conjures up different images. Child safety translates into Child Abuse Prevention. The Society and other social service providers are concerned with the injuries caused by the neglect and the emotional, physical and sexual abuse of

There is good news! Child abuse can be prevented and treated with more public education and awareness. Some commonly- recognized signs of child abuse include: repeated injuries; neglected appearance; passive, withdrawn or disruptive behaviour. What can you do? If you suspect a child is being abused, call your local Children's Aid Society. Children's Aid Societies are mandated to investigate suspected cases of child abuse.

When more people become aware of the signs of child abuse and its negative

children.

What is child abuse? It is generally defined as the non-accidental mistreatment or neglect of a child by parent(s) or other caretaker(s) that result in injury or harm. It is not confined to a particular social class, neighbourhood, ethnic group or any other classification of people or community. Its impact on the lives of its victims is devastating. Child abuse can result in lasting physical injury or even death. For instance, a baby that has been violently shaken can be permanently brain damaged and blinded. A child that has not been shown love or attention may have difficulty building healthy relationships of their own. Children who experience abuse sometimes take out their frustrations on others. This can, at times, lead to violent or criminal behaviour. The consequences are not only felt at the individual level, but also within the community.



repercussions, and when people begin to see child abuse as a community concern, more children will be protected. The Independent Order of Foresters (IOF), a fraternal benefit society that has been actively promoting child abuse prevention over the past two decades, designated October as Child Abuse Prevention Month. During October, Children's Aid Societies (CAS) place increased emphasis on child abuse awareness through their Purple Ribbon Campaigns. A number of CAS have year-round programs to help treat victims of child abuse and are linked to other community treatment programs. Many CAS publish annual child abuse reports that detail the volume and nature of child abuse in the communities they serve. To find out more about child abuse prevention, contact your local CAS or the IOF at 1-800-268-6267. Child Abuse is a preventable child safety issue.

