

# Choosing Quality Long Day Care

## Information for Families

### What is long day care?

Long day child care provides centre-based child care for children from birth to 5 years. A long day care centre operates extended hours to provide support to families who work or study. Children can attend a long day care centre full-time or part-time depending on the requirements of the family and the availability of care.

Long day care centres provide a safe environment where children can play, learn and develop in their formative years. In partnership with families, long day care centres nurture a child's development through sensitive guidance and extensive opportunities for play. Children have the opportunity to play in groups and to spend time alone.

### How can I find long day care?

As many families are seeking quality child care, it is important they begin the process well before requiring child care. This allows families to make an informed decision about the long day care centre that best meets their needs.

Many local councils provide children's services directories listing services in the local community. Families can arrange to visit services which will help in their choice of care and allow them to discuss the centre's availability and enrolment processes.

To assist families searching for care, the National Childcare Accreditation Council (NCAC) provides the names of child care services through an easy search facility on our website ([www.ncac.gov.au](http://www.ncac.gov.au)) or by telephoning NCAC on 1300 136 554.

### What should I be looking for?

Your choice of child care service may be influenced by a number of different factors and families seeking quality care for children are encouraged to consider what the best questions to ask are and what to look for in a child care service. You may also wish to ask yourself the following questions:

- Is the centre Accredited? Ask to see its *Certificate of Accreditation* and *Quality Profile*.
- Do carers speak with children in a warm and friendly way?
- What orientation process is available to my family? What will happen on my child's first day?
- How will I be made aware of staff changes? Who do I speak with about my child?

- How will my child be supervised? How will my child be supervised when playing with older, bigger children?
- What activities will my child be doing? How are these activities decided?
- What feedback will I be given about my child's day and how will this information be communicated?
- Is there a written program on display? How can my family be involved in the planning and evaluation of the program?
- How does the program cater to the individual needs or additional needs of my child?
- How will my child's ideas and opinions be listened to and acted upon?
- Do toys, equipment and activities available offer my child choice and meet his/her interests and abilities?
- Are there opportunities for my child to participate in activities where they can explore real life tasks? For example, personal hygiene and mealtimes.
- Are there spaces for my child to be involved in active noisy play as well as space for quiet play?
- Are the outdoor and indoor environment and equipment interesting, secure, safe and clean?
- What is the behaviour guidance policy and how do carers handle situations where children are fighting, crying, or being uncooperative?
- Who is responsible for providing food and drinks for my child? Is the food provided adequate and nutritious? How will my child's special dietary requirements be provided for?
- Is there written information on policies and procedures available for families? How can my family access this information?
- What happens if my child requires medication? What if my child becomes sick or has an accident whilst in care?
- Who is responsible for providing my child's nappies? Is the nappy change area clean? Is the nappy change procedure displayed?
- How will my child be assisted with toilet training?
- How will I be informed of my child's individual eating patterns and sleep routine?
- What will happen if my child is still having a bottle or being breast fed?
- What are the sleeping arrangements for my child? What happens if my child does not want to sleep?

## What is the Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS)?

The QIAS aims to provide children in long day care throughout Australia with quality care that best promotes their learning and development in their vital early years.

The broad objective of the QIAS is to ensure that children in long day care have stimulating, positive experiences that foster all aspects of their development. It does this by defining quality in long day care and providing a way to measure the quality of care.

Services that meet the standards of the QIAS become Accredited by NCAC, and are awarded a *Certificate of Accreditation* which they must display prominently. They also receive a *Quality Profile Certificate* which shows the service's achievements against each of the Quality Areas. Families can request to see this *Certificate*.

The standards for Accreditation are based on 7 Quality Areas of care which ensure that services are providing children with the best possible experiences.

### The 7 Quality Areas of the QIAS

#### 1. Staff Relationships with Children and Peers

- consistently respectful and sensitive communication and interactions between staff and children help to promote children's social and emotional wellbeing.

**2. Partnerships with Families** - partnerships between staff and families are characterised by active communication and consultation that is fostered by staff and management.

**3. Programming and Evaluation** - effective programming takes into account feedback from all stakeholders, most importantly the children themselves.

**4. Children's Experiences and Learning** - to make sense of the world, children need an environment that is stimulating, thoughtfully arranged, aesthetically pleasing and reflective of different cultures.

**5. Protective Care and Safety** - management and staff put the children's safety first at all times, and have procedures for ensuring this.

**6. Health, Nutrition and Wellbeing** - centres promote wellbeing, healthy eating and implement effective hygiene procedures through handwashing and immunisation.

**7. Managing to Support Quality** - management is effective and ethical.

For more information on Quality Areas please see the *QIAS Quality Practices Guide (2005)*.

### The role of families in the QIAS

The QIAS encourages each long day care centre and its families to work together to develop and review the service's philosophy, policies and procedures. This will help shape the children's experiences and the interactions between staff and children.

The QIAS encourages families and community members to become involved in the centre's activities. This helps children to understand their community and to build their social skills.

It is also important that families can speak freely with their child's carers or service staff about such issues as the service's policies on discipline, hygiene, excursions, vaccination, sun protection and safety.

### How to Learn More About Quality Child Care

NCAC is keen to assist families in learning more about quality child care. Information about Child Care Quality Assurance is available on the NCAC website. Copies of QA publications should also be available in services.

Families with concerns about the quality of care provided by a long day care centre are encouraged to discuss these issues with the service. Quality centres will have clear, transparent grievance and complaints handling procedures. If you have raised concerns about a quality issue with a long day care centre, but your concerns remain unresolved, NCAC has a complaints handling procedure, a copy of which is available on our website or by telephoning NCAC.

For more information about child care and choosing a quality service, please contact NCAC on **1300 136 554**.

**Office Hours:** Mon to Fri 8:30am - 5 pm, NSW time

**Postal address:** Level 3, 418a Elizabeth Street  
Surry Hills Sydney NSW 2010

**Phone:** 1300 136 554 **Fax:** (02) 8260 1901

**E-mail:** [qualitycare@ncac.gov.au](mailto:qualitycare@ncac.gov.au)

**Website:** [www.ncac.gov.au](http://www.ncac.gov.au)

**Telephone Translating Service** for calls in languages other than English - 131 450

**National Relay Service** for hearing or speech impaired callers - 131 677

### Other Useful Contacts

**Child Care Benefit** - payments for families to assist with child care costs. Phone the Family Assistance Office on 136 150 or your local Centrelink or Medicare office.

**Fair Trading and Consumer Affairs** - if you have concerns about child care fees or contracts, contact your State or Territory department responsible for fair trading and consumer affairs.