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The Home  
Safety Guru

## Safety Concerns In Selecting A Day Care Setting

By Louie Delaware

Eventually many parents will need to put their children in a day care setting. But this can be a time of concern as to will this environment be safe for their child. Most states have regulations in place establishing what needs to be present. But many overlook some other key safety items.

So in the process of selecting day care providers, you should see the following in place:

- ◆ If your state requires a license for the facility, ask to see it and make certain that it is still valid. And don't hesitate to contact your state licensing bureau to see if there have been complaints on the facility.
- ◆ Although many states have their own child-to-staff ratios, a good rule is that the ratio should be no more than 3:1 for an infant center, 4:1 for 2 year-old children, and 7:1 for 3 year-old children, and that children should be supervised at all times.
- ◆ All toys should be in good condition, be clean and not have any possible small detachable parts or sharp edges, and be age appropriate.
- ◆ There should be a policy on monitoring toys and other equipment for recalls.
- ◆ If the building is older, you should ask whether there is a potential problem with lead paint or pipes, or with asbestos insulation. Likewise, if you live in a state that is known to have high levels of radon gas, ask if they have tested the facility and request to see results (or check to see if a radon mitigation system has been installed).
- ◆ Look for securely mounted gates at the top and bottom of all stairs. Pressure mounted gates are OK at the bottom of stairs, but should never be used at the top of stairs due to the possibility of them being pushed over.
- ◆ All electrical outlets should have sliding electrical cover plates installed as these are the safest way to go. Otherwise, plastic outlet inserts should be installed in every outlet.
- ◆ Does the facility require that all children are current with all of their inoculations.
- ◆ All cabinets and drawers where they may be hazardous items (e.g., sharp, fragile, small or poisonous) need to be either locked or latched at all times.
- ◆ All toilets should have toilet locks installed.
- ◆ Door stops with caps should be replaced with solid rubber door stops.
- ◆ All tip-prone furniture should either be tethered or bolted securely to a wall. This includes televisions and free-standing ranges as well.
- ◆ Hot water should be set no higher than 120° to minimize the possibility of skin scalds or burns.
- ◆ The facility has smoke detectors that are 10 years old or less, carbon monoxide detectors that are 7 years old or less and fire extinguishers.



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- ◆ All staff members are current in their training and certification in First Aid and CPR, along with having a fully stocked First Aid kit.
- ◆ Clearly posted emergency phone numbers by all telephones. Furniture is free of splinters, sharp metal items (e.g., staples, screws, etc.) and any other hazards.
- ◆ The diaper changing area should be separated from play areas.
- ◆ Emergency escape routes pre-planned and then periodically do an emergency drill with the children.
- ◆ Limited access by outsiders to children's areas, and only when escorted.
- ◆ Window guards or stops on elevated windows that are removable in an emergency.
- ◆ Window well covers.
- ◆ Appliances (e.g., toasters, coffee makers, etc.) set back as far as possible on the counters.
- ◆ Elevated play equipment (e.g., swing-sets, climbing areas, etc.) that is properly assembled, with appropriate padding underneath and at least 6 feet all the way around the equipment.
- ◆ The play area is cleared of any possibly hazard, like roses, water wells, poisonous plants, chemicals, broken glass and the like.
- ◆ There is a secure fence in good condition all the way around any outside play areas.
- ◆ The facility has a written plan for dealing with sick children.
- ◆ All overhead garage doors have an electric eye near the bottom to sense if someone goes across the beam while the door is going down.

You should also ask for a list of references of families who use their services, and then call a number of these families to get their opinions.

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Louie Delaware, **The Home Safety Guru™**, president and founder of US Safety Pros, LLC is a Certified Child & Home Safety Professional in all aspects of home safety, from childproofing to home safety, radon testing & mitigation, along with fire, carbon monoxide, and barrier free construction. US Safety Pros has helped safeguard over 700 homes. For more information about Louie Delaware, go to his web site, [www.HomeSafetyGuru.com](http://www.HomeSafetyGuru.com).

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