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Choosing Quality Child Care

As expecting parents prepare to welcome a new baby, one of the greatest challenges many face is securing child care. Our nation is facing a child care shortage. In Kansas, current estimates indicate that an additional 85,000 child care slots are needed to meet the demand for early childhood care and education. This shortage has left many families struggling to find affordable, quality care for their children.

In addition to these challenges, many child care providers struggle to make a living wage, which further complicates efforts to increase the availability of care. In Kansas, child care workers have an annual average salary of approximately \$20,000. Addressing these issues could result in widespread benefits for children, families, and businesses throughout Kansas.

Parents looking for early childhood care are encouraged to select licensed care providers whenever possible. In many Kansas counties, home care providers account for half of the childcare options and undergo the same licensing and professional development as early childhood centers.

When evaluating potential providers, parents should observe how caregivers interact with children. Are there back-and-forth interactions between the provider and the children? Providers should treat children and their feelings, thoughts, and ideas with respect.

Other important considerations include the cleanliness of the facility, safety practices, and activities geared towards children's interests and development. Parents should also ask about discipline protocols and request referrals from current or past clients.

Quality licensed providers welcome questions about their services, and parents should ask as many as needed to feel confident in their choice.

For more information on choosing quality child care, visit childcareaware.org or contact Michelle Broxterman, mbroxterman@ksu.edu, (620)724-8233

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