

1. Does My Child Really Need Child Care?

At a Glance...

Though childcare is expensive and hard to find, it is important for parents to make arrangements for good quality, reliable childcare for their children's safety and healthy development.

Time Required

20 to 30 minutes, depending on number of participants

Core Concept

Parents will choose the best type of affordable child care available for their children.

Objective

Parents will assess their needs related to child care (i.e., Do I need child care? What times of the day will I need child care?, etc.)

Materials

- Self-adhesive name tags
- Felt tip markers in assorted colors
- Smiley-face stickers
- Flip chart or chalk board
- Markers or chalk



Icebreaker

The facilitator and participants should share the following about their children: name, sex, age, something about the child's personality (such as she is happy go-lucky, or he is curious.)



Facilitator Script

I want you to think about a time in your life when you overcame an obstacle. This can be as simple as figuring out a way to get to the cookie jar that was out of reach when you were a child or getting into your car when you accidentally locked your keys inside. As you share, try to identify at least one characteristic you have that has helped you overcome the obstacle, such as stubborn, independent, good with my hands, etc. I will share first.

As each participant finishes, give him or her a smiley-face (be sure to give one to yourself when you share.)

The fact is that we overcome obstacles every day. Often, we don't realize it because we don't get to share these stories or get recognized for being successful. One big obstacle many parents face in finding a job is finding appropriate child care for their children while they are at work. If you use the qualities that we listed today you will be able to overcome obstacles to finding child care for your children.

One thing to consider is whether or not your children need child care.

Write these three questions on the board or a flip chart:

- a. Is your child less than 13 years old?
- b. Do you have a job or go to school?
- c. If there is another adult living in your home, do you feel uncomfortable letting this person take care of your child?

Look at the three questions on the chart. How would you answer these questions? If the answer is “YES” to all three questions, you most likely need child care at least some of the time.

What are some other situations in which you might need child care? (Potential responses include having an older child with developmental disabilities, living in a high crime area, or having older children who are immature and unreliable.)

What might happen if you did not get child care for your children?

Consider the following situations:

- a. What could happen if you left your 6-month-old alone for two hours?
- b. What could happen if you left you toddler or preschooler at home alone?
- c. What could happen if you left your 12-month-old at home alone with your 6-year-old?
- d. What could happen if you left your second grader at home alone for several hours when he or she returned home from school?

Discuss each situation pointing out the dangers and safety issues as well as the potential for parents to face legal trouble if they were found to be neglecting their children. For each situation, try to think of some possible ways to take care of that child so that the problems mentioned don't happen. Encourage participants to think of as many different solutions as possible. List the solutions on the board or flip chart.



Final Thoughts

The Department of Children's Services uses the following guidelines when considering if a child is old enough to stay at home alone:

1. The child must be at least 9 years of age and of normal maturity for that age (not developmentally delayed);
2. A 9-year-old may stay alone a maximum of two hours per day without a babysitter or an adult present;
3. Time alone must be during daylight hours, the child must have access to a phone, and the child must be unafraid to stay alone;
4. A child must be 12 or 13 years old and of normal maturity to babysit children younger than 9 years of age.