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How to Check If Your Day Care Center Is Safe

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Parents and lawmakers across D.C., Maryland and Virginia are concerned about children's safety at day care centers after recent deaths and cases of child abuse.

A day care provider in Prince George's County, Maryland, was charged with murder last week in the death of 9-month-old Savannah Wright. Two day care center teachers in Prince William County, Virginia, were convicted last month of child cruelty and running what a prosecutor called a "baby fight club."

Here are five things you can do as you search for a nurturing and safe child care provider:

1. Check that the care provider is licensed: It's important to make sure the center or provider has a current license and the staff is qualified, according to HealthyChildren.org.

The links below will take you to websites where you can search for licensed child care centers in the area:

- **Washington, D.C.**

- **Maryland**. You also can use a personalized **referral service called the Maryland Family Network**.

- **Virginia** (Not all child care programs in Virginia are required to have a license. **Go here to read** about different types of care).

2. Ask about the provider's policies: Get the scoop on discipline, snack time, adult-to-child ratio, group size, television and illness policies, HealthyChildren.org recommends. Don't be afraid to ask plenty of questions.

3. Observe: Before choosing a child care center, go to the center and observe how the caregivers interact with infants and children. Baby Center says caregivers should be trained, responsible, enthusiastic and well-prepared. It may be helpful to talk to other parents who use the center and get feedback.

4. Make a safety check: it is vital to make sure the center is clean, child-proofed and stocked with age-appropriate toys and activities, Early Experiences says.

5. Follow your instincts: Child Care Resources says to trust your gut when making a decision, and keep searching if a child care center just doesn't feel right.

Published at 4:40 PM EDT on Apr 14, 2016

Find this article at:

http://www.nbcwashington.com/news/local/Tips-to-Ensure-a-Childcare-Center-is-Safe-and-Nurturing-For-Your-Child-375735981.html

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