



nsw commission for
children & young people

A Parent's Guide to Choosing Child-Safe and Child-Friendly Programs

This guide will help you decide how child-safe and child-friendly an organisation, activity or program is for your child.

What do we mean by child-safe and child-friendly?

- **Child-safe** means taking steps to help keep children safe from physical, sexual or emotional abuse.
- **Child-friendly** means kids are valued, respected and included so they feel confident someone will listen.

You can feel more confident about choosing the best program for your child by doing three important things:

Asking Questions: Talk with program staff and ask them about staff recruitment, child safety, levels of supervision, their code of conduct, how they handle complaints, do they welcome parent and children's involvement.

Look Around: Take the time to have a look around, observe how the staff responds to the kids' needs and how the staff treat one another. Ask yourself, will your child feel happy, safe and involved in this environment?

Talking with your child: This is a great way to understand your child's experience of a program and how they feel about it.

Here are some **QUESTIONS TO ASK:**

Questions:	A good organisation should:
<p>What sort of things do you do to make sure your staff and volunteers are safe to work with kids?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Welcome questions about staff and volunteer selection. ■ Explain what type of background checks are completed on staff such as, police checks and/or (in NSW) the Working With Children Check. ■ Describe their recruitment process and how references are required and thoroughly checked. ■ Promote and advertise their rigorous employment and screening processes. ■ Have appointed a Child Safety Contact Person.
<p>What training is offered to your staff and volunteers?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Regularly provide training to staff on child development, including the health, educational and safety needs of kids. ■ Routinely provide training on child protection issues, so that staff know what to do if they are concerned a child is at risk of harm. ■ Require staff and volunteers to be trained in first aid and keep their skills up to date. ■ Display certificates identifying what training has been undertaken.

**NSW Commission for
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Level 2

407 Elizabeth Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010
Ph: (02) 9286 7276
Fax: (02) 9286 7267
TTY: (02) 9286 7268
E-mail:
kids@kids.nsw.gov.au
www.kids.nsw.gov.au

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Questions:

A good organisation should:

What level of supervision do you provide for children in your care?

- Maintain good staff to child ratios, which increase during excursions or camps.
- Have a clear policy on qualified to unqualified staff ratios and male to female ratios, especially on overnight trips.
- Discourage staff from being in a one on one situation with kids, without another staff member being close by.
- Have clear policies for toileting and nappy changing of children.

What support and supervision is provided to staff and volunteers?

- Induct new staff and volunteers to clearly explain the organisation's values and policies.
- Closely supervise new staff and volunteers during a probationary period.
- Make sure a senior staff member is available to support new staff and volunteers.

Do you have a child protection policy and a code of conduct?

If so, ask for a copy.

- Have a written child protection policy.
- Be able to tell you how the policy works and that staff and volunteers are trained in its implementation.
- Explain to you the specific areas covered in the policy such as discipline and bullying procedures.
- Involve kids in the development of the Code of Conduct.
- Be clear about to whom the Code of Conduct applies and what happens if there is a breach of the code.

Do you have a grievance or complaints policy?

Ask how it works in making your child safe.

- Provide you with the name of the Child Safety Contact Person who a carer or child can contact if they have a concern.
- Explain to you the complaints or grievance procedure and what happens when a complaint is made.
- Have trained staff on the organisation's grievance or complaints policy.
- Educate kids about who they can talk to if they are concerned or worried about something and what will happen when they raise a concern.

Are carers welcome at any time?

- Encourage active parent participation, including allowing carers to come onto the premises at any time.

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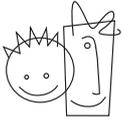
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Questions:

Are kids asked for their ideas and suggestions?

A good organisation should:

- Actively involve young people in decisions and policies which directly impact on them.
- Encourage kids to provide feedback on activities and the organisation.
- Involve kids in developing a Code of Conduct for themselves.

Here are some **THINGS TO LOOK FOR:**

Look for the following:

Was your child greeted when they arrived at the organisation or program?

Good organisations and staff will:

- Greet children by their names and ask how they are feeling.
- Remember something special about your child, such as what activities he or she likes doing best.
- Get your child involved in an activity and encourage his or her participation with other kids.

How do the staff interact with each other and with senior members of staff?

- Behave in a friendly and respectful manner with each other.
- Not argue or have conflict with each other.
- Take pride in their work and their environment by always being enthusiastic and helpful towards each other.

How do the staff interact with the kids?

- Stop when approached by children and physically get down to a child's level to listen to what they have to say.
- Talk and engage with children in a respectful way.
- Always respond in a positively to children, and show empathy when a child is upset.

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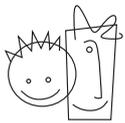
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LISTENING TO AND TALKING WITH your child

Regularly talking about their day lets your child know you are interested in what they do. This helps kids feel they can tell you when things aren't going well or they have worries.

Here are some questions you might want to ask, perhaps when you're driving home, or if they're helping you around the house, that will help prompt discussion and bigger responses from your child than 'yes' or 'no' answers:

1. What did you do today with/at...?

2. What was the most fun?

3. Where did you spend most of your time?

4. What sort of things did you do?

5. Who did you play with?

6. Does everyone play together?

7. Was there anything that wasn't fun?

8. Were all the adults or big kids helpful?

9. What/Who did you like best?

10. What/Who didn't you like?

11. Would you like to go again?

12. What would you like to do next time you are there?

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