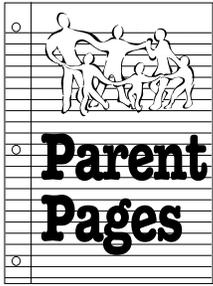


# Choosing School-Age Child Care



Are you a working parent with school-age children? Does your child's school day end at three and your workday at five? If so, you're probably worried about your child being home alone. You're not alone. According to many research studies, children left without adult supervision for long periods of time may be at risk for certain behaviors. Not

only do they watch too much television, are overly anxious and fearful, and eat too much junk food, but some may also have accidents, smoke cigarettes, or use drugs or alcohol.

If you decide that your school-age son or daughter is not old enough, mature enough or able to stay home alone after school, you want to find responsible and reliable adult supervision for him or her.

Here are some options:

- ◆ You can hire a friend, neighbor or relative to care for your child in your home.
- ◆ You can arrange with a neighbor to have your child go to her home after school.
- ◆ You can place your child in a family day care home.
- ◆ You can place your child in an organized school-age child care program in a daycare center, school, community center or church.

The child care council has resource and referral services to help you find either family day care or organized school-age child care. Your school district may be able to direct you to available services. Your employer may also have information on community child care options.

Once you have the names of some programs, call them and ask the following questions:

- ◆ Does the program serve children the age of your child?



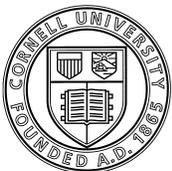
- ◆ Is the program located near your child's school and does it provide transportation to the site?
- ◆ What are the fees and are they affordable?
- ◆ Does the program operate during the hours and days you need

If the answers are yes, the next step is to visit the program site and meet the director and staff. On the back of this page, there is a checklist you can use to evaluate the quality of school-age child care programs. Use it when you visit.

A high quality program can enrich your son or daughter's childhood. He or she can learn new skills, form friendships, feel safe and use free time constructively and creatively. Parents can feel secure when they know their children are safe and happy. Remember, it's your responsibility to make sure your child is safe. When you're not comfortable with him staying home alone after school, consider and evaluate community options for appropriate after-school supervision.

*Source: Project Home Safe, American Home Economics Association; adapted by Tim Jahn, Human Development Specialist, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County. **Parent Pages** was developed by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County*

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