

Choosing Afterschool Care

Children in quality afterschool programs tend to do better academically in school and have fewer problems with delinquent behavior, alcohol and drugs. Effective afterschool programs offer a different environment from the regular school day and differ significantly from child care services for younger children. To find the afterschool program that is right for you and your child:

- › Ask family members, friends and school personnel for recommendations.
- › Call the programs and ask about availability, hours and fees.
- › Visit the programs and interview staff.

Look for these features in a quality afterschool program:

- › Well-trained staff that:
 - › Have all been cleared through a Level II background screening and drug test.
 - › Are certified in CPR and First Aid.
 - › Engage children and youth in positive and respectful ways through listening, acceptance and appreciation while adhering to clear limits and consistent rules.
- › A system for documenting the arrival and departure of all children and youth.
- › Written policies and procedures for transporting children and youth safely, if applicable.
- › Adequate adult supervision of children and youth at all times.
- › Indoor and outdoor activities adapted to suit children of varying ages.
- › A daily schedule that is flexible, allowing children and youth to transition smoothly from one activity to another.
- › Availability of homework help, tutoring, and other engaged-learning activities from communication with local teachers or school administrators.
- › Drinking water is available at all times and healthy snack options are offered.
- › Resources, such as a library, sports equipment and enough art, craft and reading materials to keep children interested.
- › Activities that develop personal and interpersonal social skills and promote respect for cultural diversity. For adolescents, activities that foster an appropriate sense of independence based on their level of maturity.



For a comprehensive list of standards for quality afterschool programs, visit the *Resources* page at www.myfan.org

ALSO ASK:

- › Can children come before school and on holidays as well as in the afternoon? Is there an extra fee for that? Is there a late fee if you must pick up your children after the program is over?
- › Can children attend only a few times a week instead of every day—to accommodate parents' schedules, to save on costs, or to allow for partial sibling care?
- › What are the costs? Are there extra fees for trips, personal tutoring and lessons?
- › Are there opportunities for family involvement?

For more tips, contact the Florida Afterschool Network at www.myfan.org.

Your children can help you evaluate their afterschool care. Remember to talk with your child about the program and each day's activities.

HERE'S HELP

Use the **Family Resources** on **pages 72–78** to learn about a variety of family support services available in your community.