

## What's the Back Up Plan?

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When you decided to seek child care, you planned to locate the "best matched" provider for your child. You took the time to research programs, visit staff, and ask all the right questions. You were able to make your decision and now you're ready to go. But, are you sure you've thought of everything?

You have the formula, diapers, a favorite blankie for naps, and an extra change of clothes. But, do you have a back up plan? You may be wondering why you even need one. Regardless of your child care setting - family child care or center-based - it is important to think about a back up child care plan. There may be times when you know your provider will not be available. But there are also times when your provider may have to be closed on short notice due to illness or an emergency.

To avoid any last minute searches for back up child care, have a plan in place when you start with your primary child care provider. Here are some helpful hints:

- Check with your provider. Your child care provider may have information about back up child care that he/she suggests or has made arrangements with.
- Plan ahead. Know your provider's schedule. Make note of dates the program will be closed (holidays and vacations). These may have been indicated in the parent handbook or contract. While you can't predict illness, you can at least be prepared for the closures you're aware of.
- Have more than one back up. Try to come up with a few solutions to your back up child care needs. You may have family in the area who are willing to help out from time to time. There may be a stay-at-home mother who has mentioned that she's available if you ever need someone.
- Will your employer help out? Check to see if there are any back up child care programs available through your company. Some employers may offer on-site back up care that employees are able to access. There are also companies that have designated "back up spots" at child care centers within the community. Depending on your job, you may be able to work out a telecommuting arrangement while your provider is closed.
- Back up is not just back up. Be as serious about your search for a back up child care provider as you were with your child's primary provider. When locating a back up provider take the same steps you did in your initial search. Ask the questions, conduct the interviews, visit the location, and ask for references. A temporary solution can still leave a lasting impact on your child. Therefore, you want to make sure you and your child are both comfortable with the arrangement you select.

To find referrals of child care programs that provide back-up care, contact your local Child Care Resource & Referral agency (CCR&R). If you do not know who your CCR&R is, visit [www.childcareaware.org](http://www.childcareaware.org) or call 1-800-424-2246.