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Special Needs

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guarantees children with disabilities the opportunity to participate in all activities of community life, including attending child care. However, just because child care programs are available to your child does not mean that all child care settings will work for you.

You need to look at a setting that suits your child's individual needs and a provider with whom you are comfortable. Contact us at (877) 425-0009 for information on providers who have experience caring for children with various disabilities.

If your child has significant medical needs you should look closely at the setting. Is there a good adult-to-child ratio? Will there always be an adult available to care for your child? Who will take the time necessary to work with your child? If your child has sensory issues, make sure the environment is not overly stimulating for him. Some children may need a smaller group while others will do best with a large amount of peer interaction. You have to decide which environment will optimize your child's potential and participation.

You need to consider other factors as well, including the provider's communications system. Do you get the kind of in-depth information you are looking for every day? Ask about the center's rate of staff turnover. If your child requires a consistent routine or has trouble with transitions, you need a center with a stable staff.

If there is a child with special needs in the class, go to the center to observe how the child is included in the activities. Bring your child in and see how she is accepted by the other children and staff. The most important thing is to find a teacher who is open to learn about your child's needs.

Parents of children with disabilities, and the children themselves, have certain rights under the law:

- Free public education that is appropriate for your child

- Notification if the school chooses to initiate an evaluation
- The right to initiate an evaluation of your child
- Informed Consent: (agreement in writing to the evaluation program for your child)
- The right to obtain an independent evaluation at any time
- Participation in the planning of your child's IEP (Individualized Education Program)
- The right to be informed by the school of the Americans with Disabilities Act