

who is  
in your  
family?



# Tips for choosing a rainbow-family friendly childcare centre or kindergarten

Choosing a childcare centre or kindergarten for your child can be difficult. It might be the first time your child has been away from a family member or home for an extended period of time; this can be an emotional event within your family.

The number one recommendation from parents is to talk to your friends about the questions they asked, or wished they had asked, when enrolling their kids.

Of course there are a range of factors influencing your choice of childcare centre or kindergarten, including distance from home, availability of places, cost, quality of educational programs and quality of facilities. Most of us also hope that our childcare centre or kindergarten will be welcoming and inclusive of the diversity of rainbow families – with two dads, two mums, sole parents, foster parents and so on.

Below are some suggestions on what to consider, ask and query when attending an interview or open day. In many cases these questions could relate to a diversity of families, not just rainbow families.

## Do your research

- Read the centre or kindergarten website and look for the use of inclusive language, such as ‘parents/guardians’ instead of ‘mother and father.’
- Read the centre philosophy or policies that might include the importance of supporting multiculturalism, being non-judgemental and catering to diverse family types.
- Check the waiting list, intake or registration form for inclusive language – are there places to easily record your family members?
- Importantly, do the environment and activities outlined on the website suit you and your child?

## Visit the centre or kindergarten

- If there are two parents or maybe more co-parents, it might be worth visiting the centre together and checking reactions. Do they treat you as parents? If one or more parents can't be at the initial visit, mention them and check how comfortable the workers seem to be.

## Consider

- What does the centre ‘feel’ like? How do the carers seem to relate to the children? Do the kids seem engaged?

- Look for posters and images on the walls – are they inclusive of a wide range of families and cultures?
- Ask to see the books made available to children – do they include a diversity of families in the stories?

## Talk to the Coordinator or staff

You could ask:

- Has the centre had other rainbow families send children there? If yes, what has the centre's experience been like? Positive responses might include understanding what the kids call their parents, and getting books/posters/activities that reflect diverse families.
- What resources does the centre have that reflect diversity? Have they thought about this? If not, do they seem willing to do so in future?
- How does the centre handle Mothers'/Fathers' Day? Do they celebrate them at all? If so, how do they include children (not only from rainbow families) whose families are not just one mum and one dad?
- What are the opportunities for parental involvement – committees, working bees, activities in the room? The more involved you can be, the more successful your family's relationship with the centre is likely to be.
- What are the centre's policies around behaviour, discipline, inclusion and gender? How do they respond to difficult behaviour or conflict between children? Most centres will have a Diversity or Inclusion Policy – ask to see a copy.
- How do the workers respond to children's play when it includes role-playing and/or dressing up as the opposite sex? Would they encourage them in their chosen activity or redirect them to a more conventionally gendered activity or costume? What would a worker do if, for example, two girls were playing getting married and other children objected?
- If other kids ask questions like ‘Who is your real Mum?’ or ‘You can't have two Dads’, how would staff respond?

For more information on how to choose a childcare provider and what to expect, visit the National Council Childcare Accreditation Inc at [www.ncac.gov.au](http://www.ncac.gov.au).

Thanks to the parents, Rainbow Families Council members, childcare workers and survey respondents who contributed.

50% recycled stock – May 2010

our families come in all different shapes and sizes. it's love that makes a family.