

**NLWJC - Kagan**

**DPC - Box 024 - Folder 009**

**Family - Child Care: Handbook**

Denk/Niok -  
Is there anything  
here?

Elena

Alaya

EK

Family -  
child care -  
handbook

1997

WHITE HOUSE

CONSUMER'S HANDBOOK  
ON  
CHILD CARE

United States  
Office of Consumer Affairs  
Washington, D.C.

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## WHAT'S IN THIS HANDBOOK

The information in this *Child Care Consumer's Resource Handbook* is presented in two parts: (1) tips for shopping for child care services and (2) contacts for information and assistance.

Part I of the *Handbook*, "Value for Your Child Care Dollar," gives tips on getting the most for your money when seeking good affordable child care. Finding the best way to voice your concerns and how to work in partnership with your child care provider. Part I also provides techniques and things to look for when choosing a child care provider.

Part II of the *Handbook*, "Child Care Assistance Directory," lists offices you can contact for help with problems or questions. This section provides individual names (where available), addresses and telephone and fax numbers for contacts ranging from child care organizations, to corporate, to government agencies at city, county, state and Federal levels. Some of these child care assistance groups are highlighted below; for a complete list of agencies in Part II see the "Contents." We have also included a state-by-state comparison of laws and regulations covering child care services.

Throughout the sections, a number of electronic addresses are listed for access through the worldwide web. The websites listed here omit <http://> and begin with [www](http://) (in the interest of space). Listed also are telephone numbers that provide access for hearing and speech impaired consumers; they are in bold type. A subject "Index" is at the end of the Handbook to help you locate information about specific topics.

## **OTHER SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE**

### **NATIONAL CHILD CARE ORGANIZATIONS**

There are many national organizations whose missions are consumer assistance, child care advocacy, protection of children, and/or child development. Several of these organizations will assist consumers directly. Others are interested in hearing about general problems and concerns. Most, though not all, develop educational materials for consumers. Addresses, telephone numbers and descriptions of these organizations are listed in the "National Consumer Organizations" section of this Handbook, beginning on page \_\_\_\_.

### **CORPORATE CONSUMER CONTACTS**

Some companies offer on-site child care facilities. Several corporations own child care businesses. Contacts listed can help answer questions and in some limited cases resolve complaints.

### **State, County and City Government Consumer and Child Care Offices**

State and local child care and consumer protection offices can help you resolve consumer complaints and provide you with information. These agencies might mediate complaints, conduct investigations, prosecute offenders of child care and consumer laws, license and regulate professions, provide educational materials and advocate in the consumer interest. It is important to report complaints and questions to these governmental agencies. Consumer complaints form the basis of most child care and consumer protection law enforcement actions.

### **STATE AGENCIES AND COMMISSIONS**

In addition to state and local agencies, many states have special agencies and commissions to handle child care issues. These commissions and agencies are listed separately beginning on page \_\_\_\_.

In addition, a variety of other helpful community services might be

available in your area. For example, county and state Cooperative Extension Services offer information about health, safety and nutritional needs. Information about these and other state and local services can be found at your library and in the telephone directory in the city/municipal, county or state government listings.

### **Military Family Support**

Interested consumers will find a list of military support offices on page \_\_\_\_\_. The list includes the regional offices and headquarters for all the Armed Forces family support services.

### **SELECTED FEDERAL AGENCIES**

Many Federal Government agencies can help you with consumer question and complaints. Several of these agencies have enforcement authority and/or complaint handling responsibilities. The Federal agencies listed, beginning on page \_\_\_\_\_, respond to consumer complaints and inquires.

### **CHILD CARE AND CONSUMER GROUPS**

Private and voluntary organizations usually are created to advocate specific consumer or children issues. In some communities, these groups will help with complaints. However, they have no enforcement authority. To find out if such a group is active in your community, contact your state or local government consumer protection office. A list of the state and local offices begins on page \_\_\_\_\_.

### **FEDERAL INFORMATION CENTER**

The Federal Information Center (FIC), administered by the General Services Administration, can help you find information about the Federal Government's agencies, services and programs. The FIC can also tell you which office to contact for help with problems.

You may call toll-free from anywhere in the United States to 800-688-9889. Users of text telephones (TDD/TTY) may also call toll-free by dialing 800-326-2996.

## CONSUMER INFORMATION CATALOG

The *Consumer Information Catalog* lists approximately 200 free or lowcost publications with helpful information for the public. Topics include child care, education, Federal benefits, financial planning, food and nutrition, health, housing, small business and more. This free *Catalog* is published quarterly by the Consumer Information Center of the General Services Administration. Single copies of the *Catalog* only may be ordered by sending your name and address to Catalog, Consumer Information Center, Pueblo, CO 81009 or by calling 719-948-4000. Non-profit groups that can distribute 25 copies or more each quarter automatically can receive copies by writing for a bulk mail card.

You may visit their website at [www.pueblo.gsa.gov](http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov) or dial the bulletin board system on 202-208-7679.

## LIBRARIES

The local library can be a good source of help. Many publications mentioned in this *Handbook* can be found in public libraries. Some university and other private libraries also allow individuals to use their reference materials. Check your local telephone directory for the location of a nearby library.

## MEDIA PROGRAMS

Local newspapers, radio and television stations often have "Action Line" or "Hot Line" services. These programs can help consumers with their problems. Sometimes these programs, because of their influence in the community, are successful in helping to resolve consumer complaints. Some action lines select only the most severe problems or those that occur most frequently. They might not be able to handle every complaint.

To find these services, check with your local newspapers, radio and television stations, or local library.

## **OCCUPATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL LICENSING BOARDS**

Most state or local agencies register members of various professions including child care providers. In some states, local consumer agencies license or register some professions.

Besides setting licensing standards, these boards also issue rules and regulations; prepare and give examinations; issue, deny or revoke licenses; bring disciplinary action; and handle consumer complaints.

Many of these boards have referral services or consumer education materials to help you select a professional. If you contact a licensing agency about a complaint, the agency will contact the professional on your behalf and, if necessary, might conduct an investigation and take disciplinary action against the professional. This action can include probation, license suspension or revocation.

To find the local office of an occupational or professional licensing board, check your local telephone directory under the headings of "Licensing Boards" or "Professional Associations," or look for the name of the individual agency. If you need help locating the right office, contact your state or local consumer office or elected representative.



**PART I**  
**VALUE FOR YOUR CHILD CARE DOLLAR**  
**PROTECTING YOUR CHILD, PROTECTING YOURSELF**

"Nothing can be more stressful or difficult than finding the right child care provider for your child." " Nothing can be more rewarding for you and your child than finding a safe, enriching, affordable day-care environment." Between these two statements, parents or guardians usually will find the truth of day care.

Out of all the products and services you will buy, the value of your child care dollar and what it will purchase is extremely important to your family's well-being. The pressure parents and guardians feel in finding a care giver is great. Yet some parents spend less time on researching child care than buying a car. Many parents do not know where to look or whom to call for help they need. The purpose of this *Handbook* is to give you more knowledge and more choices to find the best child care for your family.

There are components to child care, just as there are to any purchase. The three most mentioned things parents look for are safety, enrichment for the child, and price or value. Also mentioned are convenience to home or work, rapport with care giver, cultural similarities, and language as factors to child care decisions.

Whatever the child care setting you choose safety will be your paramount concern, just as it is at home. The following tips will help you make your decision:

**Tips for Child Care Safety**

- ! Smoke detectors and fire extinguishers are working and accessible.
- ! Electrical outlets are covered with protective caps.
- ! Window blind and curtain cords are out of reach.
- ! Exits are clear of obstructions.
- ! Adults and children wash their hands before preparing food,

(Safety Tips cont.)

before and after meals and after diapering or using the toilet.

- ! Diapering is done in separate space, away from play or food.
- ! Dangerous items, such as cleaning supplies or breakables, are stored in original, labeled containers and either locked away or otherwise kept out of reach.
- ! Perishable foods are kept refrigerated. Other foods that could pose a choking hazard to toddlers and babies are kept out of reach.
- ! Baby toys are age appropriate and cleaned daily with child-safe disinfectant.
- ! Play equipment has no sharp edges or loose pieces and is in good working order.

**Emergency plans:**

If you chose a family day-care home that has only one adult, there must be a backup plan in case the provider gets sick or a child needs emergency attention. Also check training for first aid, CPR and Heimlich maneuver. This should be part of your evaluation.

**Nutrition:**

If your day care provider serves meals, make sure they are appropriate for young children and appetizing. Meals and snacks should include fruits and vegetables and be well balanced.

Your child care partnership should not end once you have made your choice. Make periodic checks to see that the standards on which you based your decision continue to apply.

## FINDING THE BEST CARE GIVER FOR YOUR CHILD

Family - child care - handbook

Tom/Nicole -

FYI.

Elena

(I've sent the handbook separately.)

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** TOM FREEDMAN, MARY SMITH  
**FROM:** DREW HANSEN  
**RE:** CONSUMER'S HANDBOOK ON CHILD CARE  
**DATE:** AUGUST 20, 1997

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### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE HANDBOOK

The current handbook proposal seems to contain most of the relevant information for consumers who are choosing child care. The main problems with it is that it is organized poorly and that it places too much emphasis on the other sources of information (besides the handbook) that the consumer can access for additional information.

- **Ease of use.** Currently, the handbook is set up more like a quasi-academic compendium of child care information than an easy-to-use consumer guide. The handbook should be organized around the central question "How do I find quality child care for my child?" and should take the reader through a simple, step-by-step process of questions and answers (see proposed outline below). The language should be pitched at around a 5th-grade reading level. Also, the format of the handbook should contain considerable "white space" and graphics, something like the popular "\_\_\_\_\_ for Dummies" series of books ("Windows for Dummies," "Wine for Dummies," etc.).
- **One-stop information.** The current handbook has too much information on the "Other sources of information and assistance." We do not want the users of this handbook to have to search through the other available child care information organizations to find the answers that they need. Instead, we should provide as much information as possible in the handbook. Of course, we will need to provide information about other resources, but that information should be in an appendix or as the last chapter, instead of as the first piece of substantive information in the handbook as it is now (tentatively beginning on page 2). Also, even though finding information from these other agencies is almost always easier on the Internet, we should de-emphasize Internet resources as much as possible, as most Americans either do not have access to the Internet or do not know how to use it.

### PROPOSED ALTERNATIVE OUTLINE FOR THE HANDBOOK

#### I. "How do I find quality child care for my child?"

The point of this section is to introduce the consumer to the issues involved in choosing a child care provider. This section would provide an introduction to the handbook, telling the reader that

he or she can find an easy, step-by-step procedure for finding quality child care simply by working through the rest of the handbook. This section would also contain general information about child care, such as information about what kind of care is appropriate for certain ages (currently on p. 13) and about what kind of care is appropriate for special-needs children (currently on p. 14).

**Example:**

*“Finding a child care provider can be difficult. But it can also be rewarding. This handbook will give you an easy, step-by-step guide that will help you to find high-quality child care for your child. We’ll start by looking at some of the general issues that you should think about when you are considering child care.*

‘What kind of care is appropriate for my child?’

*Different children need different kinds of care. For some children . . . (etc.)”*

**II. “What kind of child care do I need?”**

This section would contain brief definitions of the principal types of child care providers outlined in the handbook (relative, au pair, child care center). It would then provide consumers with some process for deciding what kind of child care they need, either through a question-and-answer self-test or through a list of the advantages and disadvantages of the various types of child care.

**Example:**

*“These questions will help you to decide if you want to select an au pair.*

- 1. Do you feel comfortable allowing someone into your home to care for your children?*
- 2. Are you able to afford \$ \_\_\_\_ to \$ \_\_\_\_ per week for child care? . . . (etc.)”*

**Example:**

*“AU PAIR (a ‘nanny’):*

**Advantages:**

- Personal care for your child alone.*
- Consistent child care arrangement.*

*Disadvantages:*

- *Your child will not be able to play with other children . . . (etc.)”*

**III. “How can I find a good \_\_\_\_\_? (au pair, relative, child care center, with subsections for each)”**

This section would include a process and set of checklists for parents looking for each type of child care. They would be organized as 1.) How do I find a \_\_\_ in my area?, and 2.) How do I know that \_\_\_ will provide good child care?. The first section would include lists of phone numbers or a reference to a list of child care providers elsewhere in the guide. The second would include a set of “worksheets” that parents could bring with them to various child care providers (similar to the “Tips for Child Safety” on p. 6 of the current report).

**Example:**

*“How do I know my child will be safe?”*

*Is the fire extinguisher easy to find?                    \_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_ No*  
*Are the electrical outlets covered with protective caps?    \_\_\_ Yes    \_\_\_ No (etc.)”*

**IV. “What if I have questions that this handbook does not answer?”**

This section would include the “other information,” organized around topic or question (“How do I know that the child care staff do not have criminal records?”) as well as by agency.