

NEWS RELEASE

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Child Care Centers Licensed By Arkansas Department of Human Services Required To Meet Essential Standards For Care

March 28, 2011; Little Rock, Ark. — Leaving a child in the care of someone is often among the hardest thing a parent has to do. This makes selecting a child care provider one of the most important decisions for parents. Parents can use resources offered by the **Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS)** before beginning their search for child care such as lists of licensed providers and checklists for what to look for in a child care provider.

Most child care centers in the state of Arkansas with more than five children enrolled must meet minimum licensing requirements set forth by DHS. The state requires that all licensed centers meet the essential standards relating to issues involving safety, nutrition, child/staff ratios, space and personnel background checks to name a few. A list of all licensed providers can be found on the DHS website at state.ar.us/childcare. Parents may also call 1-800-445-3316 for a list of licensed providers.

Licensed child care centers may enroll in Better Beginnings, Arkansas' new quality rating and improvement system. Better Beginnings emphasizes the value of quality child care and provides the tools for establishing and exceeding standards of excellence for participating licensed programs in the state.

“DHS takes a proactive approach to quality early childhood education and care. Better Beginnings is a new, groundbreaking program that will improve early childhood education in Arkansas,” said Tonya Russell, director of Division of Child Care and Early Childhood Education.

Child care centers in Arkansas with fewer than five children enrolled are not required to be licensed with DHS. These facilities are not required to meet any state regulations, but are encouraged to be licensed.

For families, Better Beginnings provides tools to help find and select certified child care providers in their area. The Better Beginnings website, ArBetterBeginnings.com, rates providers based on their quality ratings, which are ranked as a 1, 2 or 3-star program. The website also provides a checklist of what to look for and what questions to ask when searching for a child care center.

For more information on Better Beginnings or to find the “Choosing Child Care Checklist,” visit www.arbetterbeginnings.com or call 1-800-445-3316.

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