

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Gov. Christie Whitman today highlighted the need for quality child care during a stop at the employer-sponsored center at Merck, in Whitehouse Station, and encouraged parents to make educated choices about their children's child care this fall.

"Employees of Merck are offered a tremendous benefit by being able to drop off their children just a few steps from their work places," Gov. Whitman said. "But the real perk is the invaluable benefits to these children who are enrolled in a safe, educational program where parents are encouraged to be involved with their children despite being at work."

Gov. Whitman applauded the Merck Child Learning Center for involving parents through a newsletter, orientation events, parent participation in classrooms, and its open-door policy for parents.

"Ensuring safe, quality child care is one of the most important things we can do to protect our children," the Governor said. "Parents must do their part, by thoroughly researching their options and by dropping in unannounced on their child care providers."

The Governor said parents should remember the following tips when choosing a child care center:

- Start your search early.
- Consider your needs such as whether lunches and transportation are provided.
- Consider your child's needs such as socializing and learning.
- Make sure the center is licensed with the Division of Youth and Family Services by calling 609-292-1021.
- Research the center's funding and tuition costs.
- Observe and evaluate the centers programs.

Gov. Whitman's Bright Beginnings initiative has made a number of improvements to child care in New Jersey including expansion of child care slots throughout the state, an educational program for parents to become smarter consumers of child care, and the creation of a professional training center for child care providers. The Governor has also increased safety inspections of child care centers by the Division of Youth and Family Services from once every three years to annual visits, and required all child care professionals to undergo child abuse registry checks.

The Merck Child Learning Center is operated by CorporateFamily Solutions (CFS), a Nashville, Tenn.-based private corporation which manages employer-supported child care centers. CFS' responsibilities include hiring staff, creating the learning environment, providing the curriculum, and selecting educational toys and materials.