

**Child & Family Resources Interview on After School Programs
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Martha Vasquez- In our Raising kids segment today- School is back in full swing here in Tucson but many parents are still looking for after school programs for their kids. It's a dilemma that faces the majority of working parents with young children.

Sarah McNamara from Child & Family Resources joins us now with some advice on what you should look for in terms of quality and we all want quality child care, so tell us what to look out for.

Sarah McNamara - Well, we run after school programs in TUSD so I get a lot of calls from parents asking me; "what is your program about? How do I find out more?" I always tell parents to go to the school. With an after school program you should be able to stop by at any point and see how they're operating, see if they're safe, meet the staff and see what activities they are doing there. Another way to look for quality after school programs is to see if they are licensed. The Department of Health Services offers child care licensing and typically that's just an indication that is a higher quality after school program.

Martha- Are you looking for something that provides more education, more instruction after school; after your child has already been in school all day long? Or should you look for something that's more maybe sports or crafts or something where they can just let their hair down?

Sarah- Well you're looking for a balance and for each family their needs are different. However I would recommend looking for a program that offers some academic component whether it is just homework time or possible some outside lessons that has an academic component but may be disguised as something fun.

Martha- Are there enough of those in the city of Tucson for all the kids that need it?

Sarah- Yes, I'd say the need is being met. There are a variety programs between Child & Family Resources, we run the Happy Hours program, parks and recreation run Kidco, and YMCAs. There is a wide variety in Tucson.

Martha- What are some red flags? What should you look at the minute you walk in that if you were to see some of these things you know you're in the wrong place?

Sarah- From the second you walk in you should be greeted by a staff. That's a big red flag because if your kids are going to be there they should know what adults are coming in and out of the room. They should know why you're there. So if you walk in and want to observe an after school program you should make sure that somebody comes to find out who you are. Of course in a professional way, but they need to know what you're doing there.

Martha- Ok, what else should we look for?

Sarah- the Department of Health Services, as I mentioned before, can license programs. All of their inspection results are public record. So if you ever want to know what inspections have happened or what violations schools have had, you can always go to their website and find out.

Martha- Is there a resource, a place where a parent can go to where they can find out what's around their area because a lot of parents are just not aware of what is available.

Sarah- There are a few different things as I mentioned before. We're Happy Hours and are in 10 different TUSD schools and you can always call us. I also recommend going to your child's principal and office staff in the school, they should be well informed on what programs are in the area. And of course Child & Family Resources also offers the service called Child Care Resource

and Referral. That's someone you can call and they can refer you, you tell them what your needs are and they can tell you what there is in your area.

Martha- The cost of course varies?

Sarah- Cost varies with each after school program, however our services to find your program are free. You can call 881-8940 for more information.