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Listening, learning, and living together: it's the science of life.

The Importance of Quality Child Care on Behavior Outcomes¹

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We have previously discussed how child care affects the quality of parent-child attachment (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/FM/FM14200.pdf>). Another concern parents have about child care, especially in the early years, is, "How will my child turn out? Will he or she have behavior problems, or do poorly in school?" A study by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (1998) showed that long-term, non-maternal care in the early years of life does not appear to lead to problem behavior in the preschool years. Instead, quality of child care received in the early years, rather than quantity of time spent in child care, was found to predict whether children's behavior was prosocial or antisocial (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 1998).

However, mothers' approach toward parenting was much more influential on child behavior than any aspect of child care (e.g., quantity of time spent, quality of child care). Similarly, quality of child care positively influenced children's cognitive and language development, whereas time spent in child care had no effect (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). Children who spent time in center-based child care reaped the best language and cognitive skills over other childcare options. Last,

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children who were exclusively cared for by mothers were no different from their peers in child care in cognitive and language skills.

This research would indicate that you don't need to worry about negative impact on your child's behavior and cognitive skills, provided you seek high quality, center-based child care.

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