



WHY GOOD DAYCARE
IS HARD TO FIND,
AND WHAT YOU CAN
DO ABOUT IT

solving the daycare dilemma

Donna and Bruce Davis* were in shock when they found their infant son Charlie, who couldn't yet roll over, asleep on his stomach when they came to pick him up at his daycare center. They had chosen the reputable center, one of their area's best, for Charlie and his older sister Amy, though the fee—\$370 a week—ate up more than half of Donna's salary. It wasn't perfect: There was no shaded outdoor play area, and four different providers had left Amy's class in nine months. But the Davises assumed that everyone there knew babies should be put to sleep on their back to reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome. "Every time we think about it, we get angry all over again," says Donna, who went straight to the center's director with her complaint, hoping to elicit change.

All young families but the super-rich are grappling with America's daycare crisis, a tangle of related problems experts describe as a "trilemma" of poor availability, affordability, and quality that's taking a serious toll on parents, adding a huge stress factor to their already full lives. Typical daycare costs half of what a two-income, minimum-wage family earns. And even

**Some names have been changed.*

BY JILL HAMBURG COPLAN





Too many kids,
not enough space;
daycare waiting
lists abound