

intervention programs before starting school. Parents play an integral role in their children's school readiness. They should promote a positive attitude toward learning, participate in their children's learning, read to their children, provide opportunities for social and emotional growth, and choose programs or schools that will partner with the family to foster learning ([National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, 2014](#)).

Nurses and other health care workers can guide parents in selecting enriched social and educational early intervention programs, schools, and child care centers. Careful selection of early childhood education is intrinsic to future learning and development. Licensed and regulated programs are mandated to abide by established standards, which represent minimum requirements and safeguards. Regulation is important to protect children from harm and to promote the conditions essential for a child's healthy development and learning. The National Association for the Education of Young Children serves as the model for optimal care of small children.*

Areas for parents to evaluate include the facility's daily program, teacher qualifications, staff-to-student ratio, discipline policy, environmental safety precautions, provision of meals, sanitary conditions, adequate indoor and outdoor space per child, and fee schedule. References from other parents help in evaluating a facility, but personal observation of the facility is recommended. Encourage parents to meet the director and some of the employees at a few facilities to make an informed choice.

Evaluation of the facility's health practices is extremely important. Preschoolers in child care centers have more illnesses than those not in child care centers, especially gastrointestinal tract and respiratory tract infections ([Sacri, De Serres, Quach, et al, 2014](#)). Nurses play an important role in infection control. Not only can they advise parents regarding the evaluation of a facility's sanitary practices, but they can also take an active part in educating staff in measures to minimize transmission of infection ([Fig. 12-6](#)).