

Tool Box Tip # 1 - Guide to Choosing a Caregiver for Your Child

This is a checklist for you to use as a guide when you are choosing those who will be providing child care for your child(ren). Choosing an appropriate child care provider is one of the most important things you can do to protect your child while they are in the care of someone else. You must ensure that each program or individual you choose will provide quality care.

Don't be shy about asking questions. Qualified caregivers know you should be concerned. Those are the programs that have nothing to hide. They usually have a list of rules of their own.

Nursery Schools * Day-Care * Pre-K * Camps * Babysitters

1. Check the reputation of the caregiver, even if it is someone you know.
2. Are parents welcome to visit anytime? If so, drop in unannounced from time to time. If not, choose another caregiver.
3. If there is more than one staff member, ask the caregiver about the hiring process. What are the requirements? Are backgrounds checked and what do they check for?
4. Get two references from the caregiver. Call both references. Get two other references from other parents. If you don't know any of the parents you can also call a local pastor, doctor, bank, etc.
5. Visit the caregiver with your child and ask about the program. Talk about discipline and be sure you discuss the caregiver's methods.
6. Observe how the caregiver interacts with your child and other children. They should be a warm, energetic, and able to handle frustration!
7. What activities are available for your child throughout the day? Are there toys, play equipment, books and materials to keep the children busy? Is the area clean and clear of hazards?
8. Request your written approval be required each time your child is to be taken out of the center, home or school. Never sign a blank permission slip. Insist that your child never leave with anyone but you without your written permission.
9. Tour both the inside and outside of the building. If you are not allowed in some sections or rooms, choose another caregiver.
10. When you pick up your child, talk about his/her day and activities. Does your child seem excited and content about his/her day?
11. If your child is ever upset about being left with the caregiver, find out why. Don't ever assume your child is just being difficult.
12. Keep in touch with the other parents. In many sexual abuse cases most parents had witnessed some of the signs of abuse from the start including: vaginal infections, soiled underwear, nightmares, bedwetting, and child refusing to go to the daycare. Individually the signals seem insignificant, but if the parents of these children had been communicating, they would have seen a pattern of problems.
13. Check to see if the caregiver has a parents' advisory board and if so, what types of recommendations have they made in the past. Has the caregiver followed through? If they don't have an advisory board, why not start one?
14. Does the caregiver know what Shaken Baby Syndrome and Sid's are and how they can be prevented!
15. Other information available www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/publications/pub1115Atext.asp

SPECIAL NOTE ON BABY-SITTERS:

The best way to check on a teenager or adult is to talk to several parents who have used that sitter. Also ask whether the teen has taken the Red Cross Babysitting class.

Provided by: Prevent Child Abuse - NY, 134 S. Swan St., Albany, NY 12210

(800) 342-7472

Family Violence Prevention Council, 36-42 Main St., Binghamton, NY 13905

(607) 778-2153

www.gobroomecounty.com/FVPC

Child Care

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What Parents Should Expect From Providers

- Ongoing communication, open access to the home/center, frequent updates on your child's progress.
- Loving care, responsiveness, stimulation, and attention to building your child's self-esteem.
- A safe and healthy environment.
- Honesty. Caregivers should share information about problems or accidents. They should pay income taxes and meet all legal requirements.
- Acceptance of your wishes on matters such as discipline, seat belt/car seat usage, TV watching, food, toilet training, smoking, etc.
- Advance notice of changes, such as in hours or costs. You should have between a month and six weeks notice if a caregiver can no longer care for your child.
- Support for your family. Caregivers should not be critical of your family's lifestyle or values and should not be involved in family disputes. They should respect your religious beliefs and cultural background.
- Acceptance of you as the most important person in your child's life. Advice should be offered in a non-critical way.
- Assurance that everyone in contact with your child is trustworthy, properly trained, and continuously supervised. This includes caregivers' friends and relatives, custodial help, transportation workers, and visitors.
- No surprises. Your child-care provider shouldn't suddenly announce that her teenage daughter will be watching your children three afternoons per week, nor should a favorite day-care teacher disappear without explanation.

What Providers Should Expect From Parents

- Open communication. You should clearly explain your wishes and provide information on problems, or changes at home, and about your child's routine, activities, and preferences.
- Agreement on terms and arrangements (fees, hours, etc.) in writing.
- Honesty and trust. Show your trust by asking questions and not jumping to conclusions when you have a concern.
- Advance notice. Provide a month to six weeks notice of changes in your child-care plans.
- Consistency. Pick up your child on time and follow through on agreements. If you are to supply diapers or other items, bring them before they are needed.
- Healthy children. Agree in advance about when you can and cannot bring a sick child.
- Payment on time. Your caregiver provides for his/her family with this income.
- Respect your caregiver as a professional. Taking care of children is his/her profession and a demanding job. Value your caregiver because he or she is an important person in your child's life.
- Understanding and support for your child's feelings toward his/her caregiver. A child who spends hours with a caregiver should love that person, but this should not diminish how your child feels about you.
- No surprises. Caregivers don't like surprises any more than parents do. Caregivers should know ahead of time about changes in your child-care needs and about your concerns.

Other information can be accessed at www.ocfs.state.ny.us/main/publications/pub1115Atext.asp

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Family Violence Prevention
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Child Abuse
www.childabuse.org