



Finding a Child Care Professional to Work in Your Home

For many working parents, hiring a caregiver to work in their home is the best solution for their child care and household needs. In-home care can be tailored to individual family needs, and, in the case of multiple children, can be the most convenient and cost – effective option.

This handbook is designed to guide you through the process of finding an in-home caregiver. The recruiting and screening process, whether you do it yourself or work with an agency, will take several weeks or even months. Allow yourself enough time to recruit, select, and hire an in-home caregiver.

And remember, your child care specialist can help you with any questions and provide additional assistance during your search.

For more information, please contact CCI's Parent Referral Specialists at 212.929.4999.

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Common Terms

Families hire in-home caregivers on a live-in or live-out basis. As you begin your search, you will hear a variety of terms used to describe an in-home caregiver:

“Nanny”

Employed by the family to handle all tasks associated with the care of children. Duties are generally restricted to child care and domestic tasks. May or may not have had any formal training, but often widely-experienced. Work schedule ranges from 40 to 60 hours per week.

“Au Pair”

American –Lives with the family and provides help with child care and some light housework for a period of one year. Usually in late teens or early 20's. Sometimes experienced in formal child care, but most have worked as a babysitter. Work schedule ranges from 40 to 60 hours per week.

Foreign – For up to one year, lives as part of the host family to experience American life. Receives a small allowance/salary and helps with child care and housework. Must be 18 to 20 years old, in good health, and a graduate of secondary school. Typically has some experience with children-normally as babysitter or the like. Government-authorized programs require that au-pairs provide no more than 45 hours of child care per week.

“Housekeeper”

May live in the home or work on a daily basis. Often has no formal training in child care. May care for children while performing household duties. Housekeepers who live-in require their own bedroom and bath; it is recommended that, at a minimum they have 1-1/2 free days per week.

“Babysitter”

Used for brief times, or in emergency or temporary situations. Sitters usually work by the hour and are normally used by parents after work hours or for social functions.

Remember, these terms are used interchangeably. If you are looking for a person who has received formal education and training in child care, make sure you explicitly state this in your requirements.



Step 1 Defining the Job

Once you've decided to hire an in-home caregiver, the first step is defining your requirements. Do you need a person whose main concern will be caring for your child, or do you need a housekeeper who can provide some child care?

When do you want your new caregiver to start?

Particularly with a new baby, allow enough time for the caregiver to start before you return to work. This transition time will be important for you and your child. A minimum of two weeks is suggested, but longer is optimal.

Do you want your caregiver to live-in or live-out?

Although the flexibility of a live-in caregiver may appeal to you, consider the ramifications: Do you have room to accommodate another adult? Will your family have enough privacy? Will it bother you if she stays out late or has family or friends visit your home? Do you think you could get along if you are together in the same household most of the time?

How much will you pay?

The annual salary for live-in care ranges from \$8,000 to as much as \$26,000, depending on where you live. Most live-in caregivers work an average of 40-50 hours per week and start at \$300/week. Caregivers living outside the home usually earn an hourly wage ranging from minimum wage to \$12/hour. Always check within your community to determine the going rate.

For what tasks will the caregiver be responsible?

Start by deciding whether your caregiver will live-in or live-out, then outline your needs and develop a checklist of duties. For example, under household duties you might include: laundry, light housekeeping, cooking, and errands. Child care responsibilities could include: feeding, bathing, and playing with the children, picking them up from school, helping them with homework, making the children's beds, doing their laundry, etc.

Be as specific as possible when defining tasks. For example, if housekeeping is part of the job description how often do you want the caregiver to clean? What exactly do you want her to do? Defining the specific tasks will eliminate misunderstandings about the nature of the work.

What hours do you need care?

Do you require flexibility in her work schedule? Do you occasionally work late or do you travel? Will she need to spend the night- sometimes on short notice? Consider these factors as you define the job.

Be realistic about your expectations. As your list grows, remember that your caregiver cannot keep house and closely supervise your child. Prioritize the specific tasks and include them in your job description.

What characteristics and qualifications are important to you?

Carefully think about the type of person you would like to hire. What level of education do you expect? How much experience should she have? What kind of skills are you looking for? Do you want her to be athletic? Artistic? What kind of personality do you prefer? What values do you expect her to reflect? What attributes are most important to you?

What salary and benefits will you offer?

Before you embark on your search for a caregiver, make sure you ascertain the salaries and benefits generally paid to caregivers in your community. This information will help you plan a realistic budget.

Keep in mind the extra expenses associated with hiring a caregiver. As an employer, you will be required to pay Social Security and other employer taxes, health benefits (should you chose to), living expenses if your caregiver lives in your home, reimbursement for transportation, paid vacations, and regular raises.

Networking for More Information

Friends, neighbors and colleagues, can be excellent sources of information. Ask about their child care experiences, how they hired caregivers, specific salary and benefit arrangements, and how they personally relate to their caregivers.



Step 2 Search Options

Once you have determined your needs and developed a detailed job description, there are several ways to begin your search. The counselors at your child care referral service can guide you to licensed employment agencies to help you organize your own search. Your child care specialist will be able to give you a wide variety of information, from the best newspapers in which to place advertisements to estimates for the cost of in-home care in your community.

Option A Using a Licensed Employment Placement Agency

Placement agencies match families with appropriate caregivers and guide them through each step of the process- from defining the caregiver's and family's needs to helping the relationship work. Quality agencies screen applicants and potential employers, attempting to make a suitable match.

There are different types of in-home or nanny placement agencies. Some specialize in child care placements, while others offer child care in addition to other domestic services, such as housekeeping or companion services. Some agencies are small, one- or two-person companies, while others employ large staffs and make a wide range of placements. Many agencies recruit caregivers from other parts of the country; some of these caregivers are truly interested in being child care professionals, others see working in another state as an opportunity to leave their communities or as a new learning experience.

Before you speak to an agency, clearly define your expectations and prioritize the qualities you value. If a caregiver/employer relationship does not work out, many agencies have a time limited replacement or refund policy. Be certain that you understand this policy before signing an agreement with the agency.

With foreign-born caregivers, most agencies require a green card and verifiable references before they are referred for employment. Agencies usually check out several references for each applicant; some even request police and license checks for out-of-state applicants. However, some agencies check references and qualifications more thoroughly than other agencies, who emphasize quick placements. For this reason, you must carefully select an agency.

Regardless of what an agency tells you, it is your responsibility to make sure the caregiver you decide to hire meets all of your standards.

Always, always check references on your own!!

Nanny Agencies

Many agencies use the word “nanny” in their names and for their caregivers. Make sure you check with each agency to find out if their “nannies” receive specific training and education.

If you want to employ a nanny, contact The American Council of Nanny Schools which maintains a listing of schools who recruit, train, and place women as nannies (see Insert A for address and phone number). Their graduates have completed a core curriculum, received special training, and performed hours of field work. The core curriculum must include: child growth and development, family dynamics and interpersonal skills, health and safety, nutrition, the nanny as a professional, and a practicum.

If you decide to work directly with a nanny school or if you hire a graduate from a nanny school, learn as much as you can about its credibility. Ask the school about its graduation rate and placement record. Speak with people who hired graduates.

Au Pair Placement Agencies

Another option for finding a live-in caregiver is to participate in a government-authorized au pair program. These are cultural exchange programs for young Europeans interested in coming to the United States to live and/or study.

In exchange for this opportunity, the au pair provides up to 45 hours of child care over 5-1/2 days per week. The au pair must be 18 to 25 years of age, in good health, a secondary school graduate, and experienced with children. Applicant interviews and background checks are completed by a staff in Europe.

Through interviews and an intensive application process, the potential family must prove they are interested in hosting a young foreign-exchange student. Families promise to make this a rewarding experience for the visitor in return for help. The expectation is that these ‘visitors’ will be treated as members of the family. In addition, the family pays a placement fee which includes transportation to the host city, as well as a weekly stipend, and up to \$300 for a cultural or educational experience. The arrangement has a 12-month limit, which, at this time, cannot be extended.

A list of government-authorized au pair placement agencies is included on Insert A.



Pros and Cons of Using a Placement Agency

Your child care specialist can provide you with names of agencies in your community, including those that recruit nationally. Community parenting magazines and newsletters regularly advertise such agencies. Remember to ask your friends and colleagues for information.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Shortens your search process	Agency fees are expensive for families
Locates applicants who match your needs	Choosing an agency who will work for you instead of the placement can be difficult
Provides additional referrals if you are unhappy	Some agencies do not consider the needs of the families or the caregiver when arranging placements
Provides guidance on how to ease a foreign caregiver's transition into her new home	An agency's applicant screening process may be poor

Finding the Right Agency: When considering an agency, ask the following questions:

Questions about the Agency:

What are the agency's procedures for assuring a good match between you and a caregiver?

Does the agency staff conduct a lengthy interview to determine a family's requirements?

Do they make suggestions to help you clarify your expectations?

Are you comfortable with the agency's style and that of the staff?

Do you feel comfortable with the agency representative?

Does the representative listen to you and seem to care about your situation?

How long has the agency been in business?

Questions about Fees and Policies:

What are the total charges for the agency's services?

What are typical salaries for caregivers they place?

What is the refund/replacement policy?

Is it available in writing?

Questions about Recruitment and Placement:

What are the agency's standards and procedures for recruiting and screening applicants?
Who are the recruiters the agency employs? What is their training and background?
How will the agency work with you and/or the caregiver once a placement is made?
Does the agency have a track record for successful placements?
What are the age requirements for applicants?
What kind of education or training is required for caregivers?
Are background checks conducted? If so, what do these checks cover?
Can you obtain copies of written references?
Can you obtain reference names and phone numbers to confirm the information provided?
Does the agency provide references from successful placements?

Questions to Ask the Family References:

How appropriate were the applicants referred by the agency?
Did the agency represent themselves accurately?
Would they work with the agency again if the need arose?

Questions Specifically for Au Pair Agencies:

Does the organization automatically match you with an au pair, or are you allowed to review applications and interview applicants on the telephone?
Can you obtain references on your own?
Are there restrictions on families? Do they accept single parents? Families with newborns?
What if the family and the au pair don't get along? Is there a refund schedule? A replacement policy? Do you have to pay additional fees for the replacement?
Does the program offer trained counselors to work with the au pairs and the hosting families, or just volunteers? What are their responsibilities?
How often is the counselor required to have contact or activities with the au pairs and host families?
Is there a choice of arrival date and airport for pickup?
Are there current host families in your area that you can contact?
Is there always someone available to speak with if problems arise, or are office hours more limited?

Be an informed consumer. Gather as much information as you can about the agency and the candidates referred to you. Ask for all policies in writing. This will protect you in the long run.



Option B Locating a Caregiver on Your Own

Families concerned about the high cost of agency placement fees or who like the idea of selecting from a larger pool, can consider recruiting a caregiver on your own.

Pros and Cons of Recruiting Independently:

Advantages

No agency fee

The search is more personalized and potentially more complete

More flexibility in setting salary

Disadvantages

Can be time-consuming and frustrating

Advertising costs can quickly accrue

Foreign-born caregivers might not have green cards

Networking

Your local community can offer resources for finding caregivers. Talk to the staff of community facilities, or advertise and post notices in their publications, listings, and bulletin boards. Try contacting the following facilities:

- High schools, colleges, and universities
- Nurses in local pediatrician offices
- College placement and/or financial aid offices
- Churches and synagogues
- State and local employment offices
- Senior citizens' centers
- Women's centers

You can also contact teachers through the early childhood education department of a local college or university. Any one of these places may lead you to just the person you need.

Advertising

Many families advertise through the classified sections in local newspapers. The examples below are typical of child care ads. Remember, if you choose to advertise, allow about two months to complete the entire selection process.

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NANNY/FT LV- OUT

Dependable, loving, energetic person to care for newborn due June. West Village. Needs 2 yrs. child care exp. Fluent Eng, N-smkr, Ref. req'd. Call 212-555-2222 (8-10 pm.)

**HOUSEKEEPER/
BABYSITTER. LV-
IN** opp for middle-aged n/smkr friendly fam in plsnt NY suburb. Respons incld infant/chldcare, hsekpng, cooking. Driv pref, ref reqd. call Dr. Greenwald wk days 781-444-8888 eves & wknds 914-888-5555



Step 3 Interviewing Applicants by Telephone

Initial Screening

Screening applicants by telephone will help you to immediately eliminate a large number of unsuitable applicants. When you speak to people on the telephone, describe the position, determine if the applicant can work the hours you need her, and find out if the salary you are offering is acceptable.

If the applicant is still interested, ask for some basic information about her background. It's a good idea to develop a checklist and take notes during each conversation so that you will be able to keep the applicants straight in your mind. (See the worksheet on page 28.)

Suggested Questions for the Telephone Interview:

Have you worked with children before? In what capacity? What ages were they?

Have you had other kinds of work experience? What and when?

What do you like about working with children?

What is the highest grade in school that you have completed?

Do you smoke?

Do you have a green card?

Do you have a valid drivers' license?

Do you have any health problems or allergies?

Have you had any first aid or other training? When?

How long were you at your last position?

Why did you leave your last position?

May I have the names and phone numbers of three references – including your last employer?

After each telephone interview, tell the person that you are screening other applicants and that you will contact those people who you want to interview. Be sure to request references from those candidates in whom you are interested.

Preliminary Reference Checking

Before inviting the applicant to a personal interview, you might want to check some of their references-especially if you are having a difficult time deciding which candidates to interview. (If you do not feel comfortable about initially interviewing people in your home, you can always conduct interviews in a public place –a coffee shop, library or park in your area).

Step 4 The Formal Interview

Prepare a detailed job description and a list of pertinent questions before you interview the applicant. (See the worksheet on page 27.) You may want to invite your spouse or a friend to sit with you during each interview. Make sure your children have an opportunity to meet the applicant. Pay attention to how they interrelate. When she holds your baby or speaks to your child, do you sense warmth and caring? Do you feel comfortable with her? What does her body language indicate to you?

Give the applicant examples of specific scenarios to help you gauge her competence and responsiveness. Pose open-ended questions that will demonstrate the applicant's ability to think on her feet and to help you learn about the applicant- her judgement and common sense, her level of compassion and her views on discipline and child rearing.

The following is a list of sample questions. You might consider using these questions during the interview, along with specific questions that relate to your individual children and lifestyle.

Suggested Interview Questions:

If You Have an Infant:

How would you soothe the baby for a nap?
Do you believe the baby should be fed on a regular schedule or on demand?
If the baby cries, what would you do? Would you pick her up each time?
How often would you take the baby outside?
Do you believe babies should be disciplined? How would you do it?
Do you think it spoils a baby to hold him/her too much?

If You Have a Toddler:

What would you enjoy doing with a toddler?
What activities would you plan on a rainy day?
What toys do you think are good for toddlers?
How do you think toilet-training should be handled?
How would you handle a temper tantrum?
How do you discipline a toddler?



If You Have a Pre-Schooler

How would you spend a typical day?

What would you do if my child disobeyed you? What do you consider to be misbehaving?

Do you enjoy reading to children? What are your favorite children's books?

Would you mind if my child had friends over to play?

What television shows are appropriate for a pre-schooler? How much television-watching do you think is appropriate?

If You Have School-Age Children:

What assistance could you provide to my older child with homework?

What would you do with her if she had a day off from school?

What TV shows do you think are appropriate? How much TV watching is appropriate each day?

Do you like outdoor activities? Could you help my daughter learn to bicycle, jump rope, play ball? What activities would you do with my son?

Are you willing to plan/participate in setting up play dates with other children and will you supervise play dates? Are you comfortable calling strangers (other nannies and/or parents) to set up play dates?

General Questions:

How would you feel if my husband and I were detained at work and you needed to stay beyond your scheduled time?

What would you do in an emergency? What if I could not be reached?

What would you do if the kids were playing in the front yard and one of them ran into the street to retrieve a ball?

What would you do if my child started running a fever?

As the applicant responds to your questions, note what her concerns seem to be. Does she ask you what the children like and dislike, what their temperaments are like? Listen closely to the caregiver's description of herself, her background, her goals and her experience with children.

Never make an offer of employment before thoroughly checking the applicant's references. Check at least three references of the people you are considering

Step 5 Checking References

When you call an applicant's former employer, listen to the tone of the person's voice. Pay attention to what is not said as well as to what the employer mentions. People usually are reluctant to give a bad reference. It is up to you to pay close attention to any clues a person may be sending you. Make sure you ask direct, open-ended questions:

What was your job description and what were your expectations of the caregiver?
What did you like best about the applicant? What did you like least?
If there were three things you could change about this person what would they be?
How responsive was the caregiver to your child and your child's changing needs?
How much initiative did she take? Was she flexible and responsive to your requests?
Why did she leave your employment? Under what circumstances?
What do you think the caregiver's expectations are in her next job?
Would you use the person again if you needed a caregiver?

Criminal Record Check

In addition to reference checks, you might consider checking a potential employee's criminal record. Although employment agencies do not usually check police records, some will at a parent's request. Applicants do not have to comply with such requests, but their refusal to do so sends a clear signal to the potential employer.

If you are not using an agency, the question of a police check becomes a bit more complicated. Many states have strict privacy laws, and police will not run a criminal record check for individuals without their permission. You can contact your state police department, and ask for a Criminal Record Check form, which the caregiver will need to sign and submit. This must be done on a state-by-state basis if your caregiver resided in different states. In New York State,

The alternative is to hire a private investigator who will perform the service for a fee. Criminal record checks can be conducted locally, regionally or nationally. In New York State, Kieran's Law enables parents to run background checks on potential caregivers. For further information, contact the New York State Office of Children and Family Services at 1(800) 345-KIDS or visit their website at <http://www.dfa.state.ny.us>.



Step 6 Making a Decision

If several candidates remain, how do you make a decision? One suggestion is to write down and prioritize the positive and negative characteristics of each applicant and compare them. Select that applicant who not only best meets your needs, but who appeals to you on a personal level.

Above all, trust your instincts. If you have any reservations about a person, do not hire her. You are the best judge of what your children need. Finding the right caregiver for your family can be a lengthy and tiring process, but hiring a person you can trust will mean peace of mind. Try not to become discouraged, and remember that your efforts will pay off in the long run.

After you've made a decision, call the other people you seriously considered. Thank them, and let them know you will keep them in mind. Then save your list of prospects in case you need it at a later date.

Before offering the position, request a medical clearance from the caregiver's doctor or pay for a medical exam and TB test, if needed.

Step 7 Becoming an Employer

Hiring someone to care for your children defines you as an employer with certain legal obligations to fulfill. It is in your interest to establish a businesslike agreement with your caregiver. Negotiate the employment parameters: job duties, work hours, salary compensation for overtime, paid time off (vacations, personal/sick days), etc. Be as specific as possible, and respect and honor the agreement you have developed.

For example, if you absolutely cannot tolerate lateness, make sure your caregiver knows you require punctuality. Never assume your caregiver will perform duties you have not discussed. Remember, it is always easier to decrease domestic responsibilities, but very difficult to expand them.

Salary

Child care is a demanding profession, and most caregivers earn more than minimum wage. Salary depends on a combination of factors: the caregiver's previous training and experience, whether or not she is hired through an agency, and the average rate in your community. In addition, the rate of pay might also be affected by whether the caregiver is "live-in" or "live-out" and by the nature of the duties the caregiver is expected to perform.

Salary Raises

By giving your caregiver raises on a regular basis you help her to keep up with changes in the cost of living and indicate to her that you value her services. A first raise is generally given after one year of employment. Some families provide a small increase after a predetermined probationary period.

Overtime

Any hours beyond your usual arrangement should be considered overtime. Determine what type of overtime arrangement suits your family's needs. A code of standards developed by the National Committee on Household Employment recommends that overtime be paid at a rate of time and a half. However, some employers offer compensatory time off for overtime hours. Discuss this issue before the need arises.

Sick Days/Personal Days

According to the National Committee on Household Employment, the standard agreement includes at least 6 sick days and 2 personal days per calendar year.

Vacation

Most full-time employees receive 2 weeks paid vacation after the first year and more for longer service. Make vacation agreements well in advance, and discuss whether to coordinate vacation schedules or schedule them separately.

Holidays

You and the caregiver should agree on which holidays can be taken with pay. Use your own work schedule as a guide.

Bonuses

Many employers give their caregivers bonuses during the winter holiday season. Practices vary from a day's pay to a week's pay, so you may want to find out what is customary in your area.



Car Insurance

If your caregiver will be using the family's car, you may need to add her to your insurance policy. Ask your insurance agent about your state's regulations and requirements. If she will be using her own car, check her insurance coverage.

Health Insurance

Employers are not required to provide health insurance, but it can benefit your caregiver's health and assure her regular attendance at work. The cost can be paid in full or in part by the employer or deducted from a caregiver's salary. Consider offering health benefits in lieu of a first-year salary increase.

Some organizations offer health insurance for members. For example, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) offers several insurance plans. The International Nanny Association offers insurance through Isenberg Associates of Boston and insurance may be obtained personally through Oxford as well. A typical policy includes a \$300 deductible and a premium based on the applicant's age, gender, and place of residence. (See Insert A for addresses and phone numbers.)

A Written Agreement

Agreements legally clarify the caregiver's position and responsibilities, as well as the employer's. The length of the trial period, the salary, specific duties, vacation, sick days, and benefits. An agreement formalizes the arrangement and helps to eliminate the possibility of misunderstandings.

(See page 32 for a worksheet.)

Step 8 Your Legal Responsibilities

As an employer you have certain legal responsibilities. Contact your accountant or call the IRS to obtain the most current information on reporting requirements for taxes, minimum wages, and benefit levels.

Information about Tax Obligations

When you call a state or federal office with questions or to request the necessary tax forms, be as specific as possible in your conversations. Specifically ask for information on employment taxes for household employees. Two IRS guide books will be very useful to you: Booklet #926: Employment Taxes for Household Employers, and 15 Circular E: Employer's Tax Guide. Although the assistance from state and federal offices is usually good, don't be surprised if you have to contact several offices to find all of the materials you will need. (See Insert A for telephone numbers and addresses.)

Employer ID Number

In order to deduct and report employment taxes and issue employee tax statements, you must obtain an employer identification number. To receive your federal employer tax identification number you must file Form SS-4 with the IRS.

Employment Eligibility

Congress passed a law in 1986 requiring all employers to verify that a person hired for a job in the U.S. is an American citizen or is legally permitted to work in this country. Your caregiver must fill out the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services I-9 Form and show identification. Even if you hire a caregiver through an agency, you must go through this process.

Social Security Tax

If you pay an employee more than \$50 per calendar quarter, the wages fall under the Federal Insurance Contribution Act (FICA) and a portion must be contributed to Social Security and Medicare taxes. Both you and your employees are required to pay 7.65% of gross wages. In practice, however, many employers cover the entire cost themselves and list the employee share as additional taxable income on the employee's year end W-2 Form. Tax payments must be filed quarterly with the IRS Service Center in your area, using Form 942: Employer's Quarterly Tax Return for Household Employees.

Income Tax

You are not required to withhold federal income tax from caregiver's paycheck. However, should your employee ask you to do so, the employee must complete Form W-4 and you must report the amount withheld on the IRS Form 942. You must also give the caregiver a W-2 Form for the previous year's earnings by January 31. You must then use Form W-3 to send a copy of your employee's W-2 to the IRS.

Paying "Off-the-Books"

It has been common practice for many families to pay caregivers in cash or "off-the-books." Although this gives the caregiver more income and saves parents paperwork, the arrangement is illegal. Furthermore, if the caregiver decides to file for Social Security benefits at a later date, you could be liable for years of unpaid taxes and interest, in addition to fees for late payment and filing.

In addition, you are required to report the caregiver's Social Security number if you choose to participate in the Dependent Care Assistance Plan through your employer-sponsored flex account, or to claim the Child Care and Dependent Care Tax Credit on your federal income tax return (IRS Form 2441) or similar state tax credits. IRS Form



2441 then asks you to specify whether or not you have filed appropriate wage tax returns for those services.

Federal and State Unemployment Tax

You are required to make Federal Unemployment Tax (FUTA) payments if you pay your caregiver \$1000 or more in wages during any calendar quarter. As the employer, you must pay this tax annually, but make deposits at each payday. Contact the nearest IRS office for information on the FUTA rate, Form 940, filing procedures, and general information.

New York, New Jersey and Connecticut all have State Unemployment Tax (SUTA). Generally you can take a credit against your federal unemployment tax amounts you paid into state unemployment funds. Remember, each state has different requirements and rates. It is best to contact the State Unemployment Office in your area for information on your obligations as an employer. (See Insert A for resources.)

Workers' Compensation/Disability Insurance

State laws vary for Workers' Compensation and Disability Insurance. In New York for example, an employer must purchase Workers' Compensation and Disability Insurance for a caregiver who works 40 hours a week or more.

In New Jersey, an employer is required to carry a Workers' Compensation policy for any household worker, regardless of the hours worked. This coverage is generally included within a homeowner's insurance policy. If you do not have such a policy, you can purchase one from a local broker.

In Connecticut, an employer is responsible for Workers' Compensation for any household employee working more than 26 hours per week, but is not required to carry Disability Insurance. For current information, contact your state workers' compensation and worker disability office. (See Insert A for address and phone numbers.)

Step 9 Beginning the Arrangement

If possible, hire a caregiver to begin on a part-time basis at least two weeks before you'll actually need her. This arrangement will permit your child to get to know the caregiver in a comfortable environment and allow you to familiarize the caregiver with your home and your routines. To make her feel as comfortable as possible, introduce her to the neighborhood and the neighbors.

Trial Period

Establish a trial period during which time you and your caregiver will attempt to make the relationship work. The trial period will give each of you the opportunity to end the arrangement if unforeseen difficulties arise.

Use this time to get to know the caregiver. How do you feel when she interacts with your child? Does your child seem to like her? Give your caregiver explicit instructions and guidelines on safety, household rules, television usage, and visitors. Make sure she knows and abides by your discipline techniques; let her know you will not tolerate physical punishment or verbal abuse.

As soon as you feel you are ready to leave your child alone with the caregiver, gradually begin the separation. Go out for a walk or do some errands, being sure to tell both the caregiver and your child you will be out of the house for a while.

When you leave for work each morning, be sure to say good-bye directly to your child. If your child has a pacifier or favorite blanket, inform your caregiver about the object and its location. Finally, make sure you post the phone numbers for work, your pediatrician, local ambulance and poison control services, and friends or relatives who are emergency contacts.

Maintaining a Positive Relationship

Your caregiver will play an important role in your household; it is essential to maintain an open and positive relationship with her. The following suggestions can help ensure a long-lasting satisfying arrangement.

Show Respect and Fairness

Be sure to pay your caregiver in a timely manner. Follow the schedule agreed upon, leaving and returning home at the times you have prearranged. If for some reason you will not be home on time, let her know about the delay. Do not take your caregiver for granted. If she works overtime, compensate her with either additional pay or more time off.

Show Appreciation

Regularly thank your caregiver. Let her know how much you appreciate the attention and love she gives to your children. Remember your caregiver's birthday. Compensate her with additional money or gifts during the holiday season.



Always Communicate with Your Caregiver

At least once a month plan a meeting with your caregiver. Ask her if she has any questions or problems she needs to talk about. Let her know you value her input and depend on her to inform you about changes she notices in your child. If something bothers you, make sure you communicate your concerns and work together to rectify the problem. Consider a formal six- month and /or year-end evaluation.

Communicate with Your Children

Speak to your children frequently to determine whether or not they like their caregiver and enjoy her company. Encourage your children to come to you immediately if they ever are unhappy with the care they are receiving.

Be Generous

Give your caregiver annual raises that reflect the current market. Demonstrating your appreciation for her skill and experience will help maintain a good working rapport. Each year, reconsider the schedule of paid time off, perhaps adding vacation days with extended employment.

Evaluating the Arrangement

Periodically assess the child care arrangement and your relationship with the caregiver. Even if you have been very careful in your selection, you must determine if the caregiver you have chosen is meeting your child's needs, as well as your own.

Observe your caregiver, and stay in daily contact with her. If possible, drop-in and spend a couple of hours at home, or go to the office late one morning. Your caregiver should know that you are very much involved and paying close attention to her daily activities with your child. If you are unable to make an unannounced visit, ask a neighbor or relative to stop by.

As you observe the interactions between your caregiver and your child, it might be helpful to consider these questions:

Does the caregiver...

- Respond to your child with affection and good humor?
- Handle your child's upsets in a calm and supportive manner?
- Act in a manner that complements your child-rearing methods?
- Enjoy talking with you about your child's development?
- Allow your child to make choices about toys and activities?
- Appear to feel good about herself and the work she is doing?

What if it Doesn't Work Out?

Despite your best efforts, the relationship with your caregiver might not succeed. Don't be too hard on yourself if this happens. Discuss the situation with your caregiver, and if you decide to terminate the relationship, tell her why you are unhappy and give specific examples. Pay her for the time she has been with you, and begin your search again. Remember to explain the change with your children, and let them know you are determined to find a better arrangement.

If you come to the conclusion that in-home care will not work for your family, there are other alternatives. Consider "share care" and "family day care," which combine some of the advantages of in-home care with the possible benefit of lower costs. You may also want to consider a day care center, or combination of options.

Share Care – If you decide to share care, find a neighbor or a friend who would like to share a caregiver with you. Be sure to work out all of the details before the care actually begins and find a partner who has values and ideas about child care similar to your own.

Family Day Care or Center-Based Care- For more information about family day care, or child care centers, contact your child care resource and referral service.



Checklist – Finding an In-Home Caregiver

Step 1: Develop job description and criteria/qualities needed

Step 2: Decide whether to work with an agency or independently

Confer with agencies

Investigate agency's background

Select an agency

OR

Develop an advertisement

Identify newspapers

Check with community facilities

Step 3: Pre-screen candidates by phone (Telephone Interview)

Step 3a: Check references on strong candidates

Step 4: Interview final candidates

Step 5: Check additional references and past employers

(if needed, check criminal record, credit record, driver's record)

Step 6: Contact accountant and/or IRS

Obtain Employer Identification Number

Call for IRS booklets and forms

Process I-9 Form

Confirm state minimum wage and overtime requirements

Develop reporting schedule

Contact insurance carrier and State Insurance Fund

Step 7: Make offer, determine start date, discuss trial arrangement

Step 8: Develop formal written agreement

Step 9: Develop plan for periodic evaluation

Defining the Job

When do you want your new caregiver to start?

Do you want your caregiver to live-in or live-out?

For what specific tasks will the caregiver be responsible?

Child Care

Housekeeping

Meals Breakfast Lunch Snacks Dinner

Food Shopping _____

Other _____

What characteristics and qualifications are you looking for in your caregiver?

Education _____

Personality _____

Age _____

Interests _____

Other _____

Driver Y N

Non-smoker Y N

What salary and benefits will you offer?

Weekly Salary _____

Number of Sick Days _____ Personal Days _____

Holidays _____

Vacation _____

Health Benefits _____

Educational Reimbursement _____

Additional Notes



Initial Telephone Interview

Applicant's Name _____

Phone Number _____

Referred By _____

Work Experience

Have you worked with children before? _____

In what capacity? _____

What ages were they? _____

What do you like about working with children? _____

Have you had other kinds of work experience? What and when? _____

How long were you at your last job? _____

Education/Specialized Training

What is the highest grade in school that you completed? _____

Have you had any first aid or other training? _____

General

Do you smoke? Y N

Do you have a green card Y N

Do you have any health problems or allergies? Y N Explain: _____

Miscellaneous Questions _____

References

May I have the names and phone numbers of three references- including your last employer? _____

Comments _____

Second Interview? Y N Maybe

Interview Worksheet

Candidate's Name _____

Address _____

_____ Phone _____

Agency Referred by _____

References

Questions (See samples on page 14)

Caregiver's Questions/Concerns

Observations/General Reactions

Other Individuals Present



Reference Check- Previous Employment

Applicant's Name _____ Phone _____

Name of Reference _____ Gender & Ages of Children Tended _____

Period of Employment _____

How did you locate (applicant's name)? _____

What was your job description and what were your expectations of the caregiver?

How responsive was the caregiver to your child and your child's changing needs?

How much initiative did she take? Was she flexible and responsive to your requests?

Why did she leave employment? Under what circumstances? _____

What did you like best about the applicant? What did you like least?

Best _____

Least _____

If there were three things you could change about this person what would they be?

What do you think the caregiver's expectations are in her job? _____

Would you use the person again if you needed a caregiver? _____

Other Questions/Miscellaneous Comments (overtime? punctuality? preference to gender?) _____

Agreement for Household Employment

Name of Employee _____

Name of Employer _____

Weekly Hours _____ Weekly salary _____ Overtime rate _____

Employee Responsibilities _____

Weeks of resignation notice required _____

Leave-Days

Sick Days _____

Vacation _____

Holidays _____

Benefit Arrangements

Health Insurance _____

Social Security Taxes Paid _____

Unemployment Compensation _____

Workers Compensation _____

Disability Insurance _____

Employee Signature _____ Date _____

Employer Signature _____ Date _____



Emergency Information

Child's Name _____ Date of Birth _____
Address _____ Apt. _____ Phone _____

Mother's Name _____ Work Phone _____ Ext. _____
Work Address _____

Father's Name _____ Work Phone _____ Ext. _____
Work Address _____

Emergency Contacts

Name _____ Relationship to Family _____
Phone (days) _____ Ext. _____ Phone (eves.) _____

Name _____ Relationship to Family _____
Phone (days) _____ Ext. _____ Phone (eves.) _____

Pediatrician _____ Phone _____ Ext. _____
Address _____ Hospital Affiliation _____

Child's Health Information

Allergies _____
Special Conditions _____
Current Medications _____

I give consent for emergency medical care for my child _____
(child's name)

Parent's Signature Date

Other Emergency Numbers

Poison Control _____ Fire Department _____

Police Precinct _____ Local Hospital _____

Bring this Sheet to the Doctor or Hospital !!

Notes



Notes



Questions?

If you have any questions or encounter problems as you try to make your child care arrangements for your family, be sure to contact your child care referral counselor for consultation and information. Their expertise can make all the difference in your search and selection of a care provider.



Child Care, Inc.

Child Care, Inc. is New York City's child care information, resource, and advocacy service for parents and child care programs throughout the five boroughs of New York City.

Child Care, Inc. has a long-standing commitment to high quality, affordable child care for all parents.

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