



How to Choose a Safe Caregiver

As a parent, you will make many decisions about where to send your child for school, child care, or other activities and programs. While it is not easy to think about issues of child abuse, you will be more confident as a parent if your child is in a safe environment.

Before hiring a baby-sitter or enrolling your child in nursery school, day care, pre-kindergarten, or camp, consider the following.

- **Check the reputation of the caregiver**, even if it is someone you know.
- **Be sure parents are welcome to visit at any time.** If not, choose another provider. If so, drop in every few days, unannounced.
- **If there is more than one staff member**, ask the director of the program about the hiring process. What are the requirements? Are backgrounds checked for child abuse or criminal activity?
- **Get at least two references from the caregiver.** Check all references you get. Talk to parents of the kids already enrolled in the program.
- **Visit the caregiver with your child.** Ask about the program. Discuss the caregiver's methods for disciplining children.
- **Observe how the caregiver interacts with your child and other children.** Does the caregiver maintain control of the children and if so, how? The caregiver should be a warm and energetic person who easily connects with children.



- **Find out what activities are available for your child throughout the day.** There may be a schedule. Check out the toys, play equipment, books, and materials used to keep the children busy. Are play areas clean and clear of hazards?
- **Tour the building, inside and out.** If you are not allowed in some sections or rooms, choose another facility. The facility should be clean and well organized. Are there any isolated or secluded areas? Are the bathrooms used by children well lit with only one entry point? Are all hallways, entryways, stairwells, and rooms in use brightly lit?
- **Check to see if the facility has a parents' advisory board.** If so, call the board and find out what recommendations they have made in the past. Has the provider followed through with them? If they don't have an advisory board, why not start one?



- **Other policies related to safety:** Are there rules that prevent staff from taking children home with them? Are children ever transported to events? If so, how do they keep the children safe at off-site activities?

Once you have chosen a child care provider:

- **Make it clear your child is not to leave the center, home or school without your written permission.** Never sign a blank permission slip.
- **Insist your child never leave at the end of the day with anyone but you.** Tell the caregiver you will provide written notice if someone other than you is to pick up your child.
- **When you pick up your child, ask about his or her day.** Does your child seem excited and content about how things went?
- **If your child is upset about being left with the caregiver, ask why.** Never assume your child is just being difficult.
- **Communicate with other parents.** Talk with them about their experiences with the child care provider. Discuss any problems that may arise.



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Special note on baby-sitters:

The best way to check on a teenager or adult coming into your home to watch your children is to talk with other parents who have used the sitter. Ask your kids which sitters they like and why.



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