

Choosing In-Home Services for Your Child

Childcare in your home offers you flexibility and convenience and can be an option for children of all ages. It's convenient for parents who work late shifts or who travel. Some in-home providers live in your home; others do not. You must decide if you need someone to help with childcare only or if you need someone to pitch in with household chores. Keep in mind that in addition to salary, you may be responsible for providing such benefits as sick leave, paid vacations, paid holidays, Social Security tax deductions, and Worker's Compensation Insurance.

Agencies charge a fee for finding providers, checking references, bonding, and possibly offering some training. Each agency sets its own fees and policies. Finding the provider on your own (through ads in local newspapers, community or church bulletin boards, and networking with friends) can be less expensive but involves considerable amounts of time and effort.

Whether you use an agency or find a provider by yourself, it is important that you interview several applicants. Screen the applicants as much as possible over the telephone (and expect that some may not show up for their appointments). Check references before the personal interview. Take charge of the interview and be clear and specific on what your needs are — such as hours, activities with the children, fees, and responsibilities. Make sure that the candidate understands your expectations.

Consider these questions when you interview providers for in-home services.

What to think about before the interview

Do you want the provider to perform duties other than childcare?

- Yes. What are they?
- No

Have you checked with your accountant, insurance agent, and lawyer about your financial and legal responsibilities?

- Yes
- No

Will you have a trial period of employment?

- Yes
- No

Do you have a written contract for the provider?

- Yes
- No

Do you have a written daily schedule?

- Yes
- No

What to ask during the first interview

Have your child present during part of the interview to observe how the prospective provider responds to your child.

Understand that you may need a second interview to discuss specifics including your child-rearing philosophy, salary, and back-up situations.

What is the provider's personal background?

— **Previous childcare experiences?**

— **Other types of employment?**

Has the provider been terminated from any job?

- Yes. Why?
- No

Will the provider have adequate transportation to your home?

- Yes
- No

Does he or she have family responsibilities (for instance, children) that may cause interruptions in your child's care?

- Yes
- No

Has the provider had first-aid or CPR training?

- Yes
- No

Is it current?

- Yes
- No

Why does this person want the job?

Does the provider have child development knowledge?

- Yes
- No

Has the provider ever cared for a child of the same age as your child?

- Yes
- No

Issues to consider after the interview

Do the provider's references meet your standards and expectations?

- Yes
- No

Do you feel you know enough about the provider's background to be comfortable?

- Yes
- No

Does the provider appear open, honest, and calm?

- Yes
- No