



Child Care in Your Home

If you are looking for a caregiver or nanny to work in your home, it is important to choose carefully. You can start your search by:

- contacting child care resource and referral agencies, community agencies, and churches,
- asking friends and neighbors, and
- reading or placing advertisements in local newspapers, community newsletters, or on community bulletin boards.

It is important to have full confidence in a caregiver's ability to care for your child. As you interview potential caregivers or nannies, some of the questions you might ask are:

- What experience do you have in caring for children?
- Why are you interested in doing this work?
- Why did you leave your last position?
- What are your attitudes toward child rearing?
- How do you feel children should be disciplined?
- Do you have expectations about toilet-training?
- How do you feel about eating habits?
- Can you drive?
- How would you handle emergencies?

Spend some time talking about your philosophy of child-rearing and expectations for the caregiver. Discuss limitations you may have about things such as smoking, drinking, television watching, and using the telephone.

If you are interviewing teenagers for after-school care, talk to them about their attitudes. Ask if they have babysitting experience or have completed a "safe sitter" program. Contact families they have worked for, and ask if they have cared for younger sisters or

brothers. Talk to them about the kinds of activities they are involved in, and check with teachers, counselors, 4-H leaders, and other adults who can tell you if this person is responsible and capable.

After You Decide

It is a good idea to have your rules and expectations in writing. Having a written agreement can save misunderstandings later on. Both parties can refer to the list of agreements if there is a question. And, of course, agreements can be changed as needs change.

Some things you might include in an agreement are:

- days and hours of work,
- salary, including the amount to be paid, when payment is due, payment for overtime, payment for additional duties, payment for holidays, sick leave, and vacation,
- instructions for any special requirements such as food and medication,
- emergency plans in case of an accident, illness, fire, or tornado,
- telephone numbers of parents, neighbors, and other family members who can be called in an emergency,
- other tasks to be performed such as housework, shopping, and meal preparation, and
- the amount of notice to end the agreement.

Try to arrange for some time, possibly several days ahead of the official starting date, when you, the caregiver, and your child can get to know each other and become familiar with your house and the child's regular routines. Remember to prepare a medical release for the doctor or hospital authorizing the caregiver to sign in an emergency.

Minimum Wage and Social Security

The caregiver who works in your home on a regular basis, and whose primary vocation is child care, is legally entitled to be paid minimum wage. Casual, part-time babysitters whose primary vocation is not child care need not be paid minimum wage.

The “casual” babysitter is one who works irregularly, intermittently, and whose primary vocation is not child care. This person usually works less than 20 hours per week.

The “mother’s helper” type of caregiver—a teenager or student who works full-time only during summer—is still considered to be primarily a student, so the law does not require this type of caregiver to receive minimum wage.

If 20 percent of the time worked per week during the child care assignment is spent doing domestic work, the employee is to be paid minimum wage. This is the case even if the total number of hours worked is less than 20 hours, or if this individual would otherwise be termed a “casual” caregiver.

A nanny or caregiver eligible for minimum wage who does not receive it can file a grievance with the Department of Labor during his or her employment or any time after up to two years. If the grievance is found to be justified, the family is liable for the difference in wages.

Social Security tax must be paid for the caregiver in your home. You must complete Form 942, available from the Internal Revenue Service or locally at banks, libraries, or lawyers’ offices. Be sure to use Form 942 dated for the year for which you are filing. Remember that you are required to pay a percentage as the employer’s contribution and an additional percentage that is to be withheld from the employee’s wages. For more information, check with the Internal Revenue Service toll-free number, 1-800-424-1040, or on the internet at <http://www.IRS.gov>.

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Child Care Credit on Income Tax

If you pay someone to take care of your children while you are employed, you probably are eligible for a tax credit on federal and state income taxes. If you use the long form 1040 in preparing your income tax, get Form 2441. If you use the short form 1040A in preparing your income tax, be sure to complete Schedule 1, Part IV.

You and Your Child

Getting used to the new arrangements may be difficult in the beginning for everyone. Plan special time together with your child and as a family so that the hours spent together will be valuable ones.

If you are in the process of selecting or changing child care, you may want to read Child Care Checklist for Parents, PM 1805. You may request a single copy free from Extension Distribution Center, 119 Printing and Publications Building, Iowa State University, Ames, IA 50011-3171; 515-294-5247; e-mail: pubdist@iastate.edu.

The following publications are available on the World Wide Web at the following location:

<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Pages/pubs/>

- Child Care Checklist for Parents, PM 1805 (also available in print)
- Child Care Cooperatives, PM 1808
- Setting Up Play Groups, PM 1809
- Child Abuse and Child Care, PM 1810

Prepared by Lesia Oesterreich, extension specialist in human development and family life. Child Care That Works (CCTW) has more resources for parents and children from ISU Extension to Families. Contact your local extension office for details. Also visit the CCTW Web site: <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/Pages/families/life/CCTW/home.html>

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