

## Questions to Ask a Home-Based Daycare Provider

Leaving your child in the care of another is never an easy thing. You will find a good childcare solution! In the end, it comes down to trusting your intuition, but you'll also want a complete list of questions to ask potential child-care providers. We hope this helps.

- **Are you certified/ licensed/registered?** Providers caring for more than three children not from the same family are required to be licensed. A certified provider has had a background check and met certain standards for safety and adult-to-child ratios. Also, they must be recertified or renew their license every two years.
- **What education do you and your staff have?** The main provider should have some early childhood education. They should also have Infant/Child CPR and First Aid training.
- **What is the adult-to-child ratio?** There should be a maximum 1:10 ratio with no more than children under age 24 months and no more than 6 total under kindergarten age.
- **How many children do you enroll at one time?**
- **Do you have an assistant?** If yes, ask to meet the assistant.
- **What is your policy regarding sick kids? Do you send kids home at the first hint of a sniffle, or do you wait until a child has a fever?** You'll need to know when to get backup care for your child, and you'll also want reassurance that all parents will be asked to keep their green-boogered kids at home.
- **Why did you decide to become a child-care provider?**
- **What do you like most about caring for children? What do you like least?**
- **How do you discipline children when you see tantrums, pushing, fighting, and arguments?** It's important to find out which discipline methods are used as well as which ones are prohibited.
- **What would you do if my baby or child cried inconsolably?** The provider should try a series of calming techniques and also ask you what would calm your child best.
- **Can I make unannounced visits to see/ observe my child?** Stay away from any provider who doesn't allow you to come and go or that has a strict visiting schedule. You should always feel welcome to observe your child during the day.

- **What are your security and emergency policies? How will my child be checked in and out each day? What would you do if my child fell? Do you practice fire drills? How would you handle an emergency situation (earthquake, tornado, national security threat)?**
- **Do you drive the children anywhere? If yes,** ask to see the vehicle and car seats.
- **What is a typical day like?** Make sure the answer you get matches what you're looking for in an in-home or day-care center, whether that is a structured daily routine or a free-flowing atmosphere.
- **Do you allow the children to watch television? What do they watch and when?**
- **Do you provide meals and snacks?**
- **Do you smoke? Do you have pets?** If they have pets, ask to meet the pets and ask how much contact the pets have with the children.
- **What are your fees? Do you offer scholarships or sibling discounts? How and when will you bill us?**
- **Do I have to pay for days when my child is absent due to sickness or vacation?** Usually, the answer is yes, but some daycare homes allow for a week or two of vacation time per year. Some will give you a break if your child has an extended illness.
- **On which holidays do you close? Is there a backup provider?** If you are interviewing an in-home provider, it's also a good idea to find out what happens when she is sick or on vacation. Many providers make arrangements with another in-home provider in the neighborhood who can care for your child. If this is the case, make sure you meet the backup provider as well.
- **How much do you charge if I'm late to pick up my child?** It's common for child-care providers to charge one dollar for every minute you're late. However, some have a "three-strike" policy – only after the third time you're late will you have to get out your wallet.
- **What supplies do I need to bring ?(i.e. diapers, wipes, snacks, bottles)**
- **Do you have your policies in writing?**
- **Can you give me the names of some families I can call for references?**