

# Choosing Care for Your Children

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## A Babysitter in Your Home

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## **How do I find a babysitter?**

If you are looking for a sitter to work in your home and provide care for your child, it is important to choose carefully. Usual ways of finding sitters include:

- placing ads in local newspapers, community newsletters or on community bulletin boards
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- asking friends and neighbors
- contacting community agencies, churches

## **What do I look for?**

It is important to have full confidence in the sitter's ability to care for your child in a manner similar to the way you would provide care. Be certain to check the sitter's references. If the sitter brings written references, ask if you can call these people. You may feel more comfortable speaking to previous employers. Trust your instincts, too. If you don't like the person, your child probably won't either. Some of the questions you might ask are:

- 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 you have concerning the babysitter and your child. Discuss limitations you may have about things like smoking, drinking, television, and the telephone.

Arrange for the prospective sitter and your child to meet. Watch them together. If your child is old enough to understand the situation and is not

happy about it, the initial meeting may not be too successful. But observing how the sitter handles the situation may be helpful to you in making your choice.

## **Once the choice has been made**

Several things should be arranged. Make agreements about work schedule and salary. You may want to arrange for an initial trial period. Help the sitter get to know the house. Agree in advance about other expectations to avoid later problems — e.g. if any housework is to be done and how much.

Try to arrange for some time, possibly several days ahead of the official starting day, when you, the sitter, and your child can get to know each other and the child's regular routines.

Prepare a list of phone numbers where you and other family members, neighbors or friends can be reached in the event of an emergency. Prepare a medical release form for the doctor or the hospital authorizing the sitter to sign in case of an emergency.

## **Minimum wage and social security**

The babysitter who works in your home on a regular basis, and whose primary vocation is babysitting, is entitled to be paid minimum wage. Casual, part-time babysitters whose primary vocation is not babysitting need not be paid minimum wage. A babysitter eligible for minimum wage who does not receive it can file a grievance with the Department of Labor during his or her employ or any time after up to two years.

Social security tax must be paid for the babysitter in your home. Form 942, available from the Internal Revenue Service or locally at banks or lawyers' offices, must be filled out. You are to pay 12.1 percent of the employee's wages. Some families pay the full amount, some families pay half the amount with the babysitter paying the other half. At the end of each quarter of the year, a report and a check should be sent to IRS.

## You and your child

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

### Other publications available in this series include:

Family Day Care Homes, Pm-796a

Day Care Centers, Pm-796b

Preschool or Nursery School, Pm-796c

Setting Up Play Groups, Pm-796e

Babysitting Cooperatives, Pm-796f

For more information about young children, contact your local county extension office.

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