

Tips to Help You Choose a Family Child Care Provider

It's important to begin your family child care search with professional interviewing techniques of both the prospective provider and the references he or she provides. You should schedule in-person interviews with several caregivers. The more providers you interview, the more likely you will be to find a quality child care arrangement to meet your family's specific needs.

Where to Start

Screen applicants by telephone. Find out basic information such as how many children the provider currently cares for, what ages, and whether he or she has available space for your child at the times you need. If this first contact is positive, schedule a time for you to meet at the home.

Questions for the Provider During the Home Visit

Some initial small talk can put the provider at ease. You might want to ask about his or her own children, other work he or she did before caring for children, and his or her interests. After you and the provider are comfortable, open-ended questions provide the most information. "What do you like best about children?" is better than, "Do you like children?" Try to avoid questions that can be answered yes or no.

Other examples:

- What experience do you have caring for children? Have you ever had to handle an emergency? What happened and how did you deal with it?
- Are you trained to administer CPR and/or First Aid? Are your certifications current?
- Who is your back-up provider in case of emergency or illness? (Obtain contact info.)
- Do you transport children? (Inquire about car seats, driving record and insurance)
- What types of outdoors play time is provided? (Fenced backyard? Walk to park?)
- What do you like best about this job? How long do you plan to continue it? What do you like least? Can you describe a typical day here?
- Do you use a contract with families in care? Policy questions can help in determining your agreement to the terms of the contract: What are your policies regarding:

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| - vacation | - sick days |
| - payment schedule | - late fees |
| - tax issues | - a discontinuation of care |

Age-specific questions can determine if the provider is familiar with the developmental stages of young children:

- For an infant: What would you do if the baby didn't stop crying?
- Toddler: How do you introduce toilet training?
- Preschool: What types of activities do you normally do with the children?
- School age and older: How is after-school time structured? How do you provide a balance allowing for relaxation and homework?

During an interview, some people like to have their child present, to observe the interaction between the provider and their child. Others prefer to conduct the interview alone first, with the option of bringing their child over briefly another time. Be sure to notice a provider's body language. Does he or she seem relaxed and at ease, or nervous and distracted? Does he or she look you in the eye? Always trust your instincts. If you do not feel comfortable with the prospective provider for any reason, do not choose him or her!

Compatibility with your personal values should be considered. What are his or her policies on television viewing? How does he or she handle aggression? Try to identify issues that you feel strongly about and be prepared to discuss your expectations.

Questions for References

References should always be checked. When interviewing a provider, you should ask for the names, phone numbers, and relationships of at least two people you can call as references. It is preferable that references be individuals who have used the provider for child care.

Open-ended questions work best. For example:

- What did you like best about the provider? Least?
- What was the reason the child care arrangement ended?
- Why might you choose this provider again? Why not?
- In the time you have known _____, is there any incident in particular that stands out in your mind? Could you tell me about it?

Pay close attention to the tone of voice, any pauses in the conversation, or hesitation in answering. Most people do not like to give a bad reference.

Police Checks and Fingerprinting

Some parents are interested in running a police check on prospective providers. Written permission from the provider is required. There may be a nominal fee in some areas for the form. Remember, a police check only shows convictions in a given locality. Do not rely on a police check alone!

For more information on police checks in Ohio, contact:

Hamilton County (513) 946-6220
(\$5.00 cash only)
Butler County (513) 785-1000
Clinton County (937) 382-8985

Clermont County (513) 732-7500
(\$25 cash, takes 7-10 days)
Warren County (513) 925-1280
Police check STATEWIDE (740) 845-2000

In Kentucky, procedures vary by county, so it's best to contact your local police department. A state-wide criminal record check can be obtained.

For more information, on police checks in Kentucky contact:

Kentucky State Police - Records Section
1250 Louisville Road, Frankfort, KY 40601
<http://kentuckystatepolice.org>

or

Administrative Office of the Courts – Record Unit
100 Millcreek Park, Frankfort KY 40601
(800) 928-6381, www.courts.ky.gov

Fingerprinting provides more complete information and is a nationwide check. In Ohio, a fingerprint check can be done for a fee of \$22, if the person has been an Ohio resident for at least five years. For a person who has lived in Ohio less than five years, the fee is \$24. There may be a lengthy wait for results and some providers may be reluctant to be fingerprinted.

Child care center staff, certified providers and Child & Adult Care Food Program participants must be fingerprinted in Ohio and Kentucky.

This information was prepared by 4C. 4C believes that parents are best able to choose and evaluate child care for their children, because they know their child's needs best. Responsibility for selecting child care rests with each parent. A 4C referral does not imply a recommendation. If you notice conditions that cause you concern, please call us at (513) 221-0033 with the information.