

TIPS FOR HIRING CAREGIVERS

Rules for individual caregivers shouldn't be any different than the rules you'd expect when leaving your child with a large childcare center.

As parents and caregivers, we must often rely on individuals outside the immediate family to take care of our children. To ensure safety we must ask appropriate questions of potential caregivers. Some of these precautions may be a bit scary, but our own discomfort should be second to children's safety. Be confident in knowing that by asking the right questions, you are demonstrating your awareness, knowledge, and commitment to preventing child sexual abuse.

SCREENING INDIVIDUAL CAREGIVERS

- Check the background of a potential caregiver through law enforcement. You will need personal information like date of birth and social security number, as well as permission from the individual to conduct the search. Always ask for and check references.
- Let childcare providers know that you may make unscheduled visits and then follow through.
- Ask the person if he or she has ever identified an abused child and gauge their reaction to see if they would minimize or justify abusive behaviors. Ask the person if he or she has ever been accused of abusing a child and again gauge their reaction.
- Be clear with a potential caregiver about your family rules for safety, including physical boundaries, personal and physical care, and discipline. Let them know you are vigilant with regard to safety and that your child knows the safety rules.



ADDITIONAL SCREENING TIPS

Always ask for recommendations and keep a list of screened babysitters before you need them so you aren't rushed to use someone you don't know well.

Be wary of someone who is overly eager to watch your kids, like offering to babysit for free or to babysit just to "give you a break."

Bathe and get your child ready for bed before you leave.

Watch for "grooming behavior," which might include physical horseplay, tickling, kissing, hugging, massaging, and invading a child's space or privacy, like walking in while they are in the bathroom.

Set boundaries with simple things like candy or TV time and consider it a red flag if a babysitter doesn't respect these boundaries.

Watch and listen to your child; observe before, during, and after time with a caregiver; look for any changes in behavior.

Follow all of these tips regardless of the age of the caregiver, as older youth and teens can also be perpetrators of abuse.