

Child Assault Prevention

Guidelines for Choosing Babysitters and Caretakers

Children are often left in the care of other people: babysitters; family members; childcare, school, or after-school staff; dating partners; or youth leaders. As a parent, you will need to assess the safety of the care these people provide for your children.

Get to know your children's caretakers by:

- Observing them with children.
- Interviewing them if appropriate.
- Asking other parents questions about them.
- Asking your children how they feel about them and what they do when they are with them.
- Making surprise visits when your child is with them.
- Continuing to check in on how things are going.

Guidelines for Choosing Babysitters

When choosing a babysitter:

- Ask all potential babysitters for names and phone numbers of families for whom they have babysat. Call these parents and find out what they think of the babysitter.
- Meet the babysitters in person and interview them. Ask about how they discipline children. Ask "what if" questions to find out how they would cope with tricky situations.
- Train them in the following areas:
 - Your family safety rules, including touching safety rules.
 - Discipline strategies you want them to use.
 - Your guidelines for TV viewing, particularly what your children can and cannot watch and how much time they are allowed.
 - Your rules about the babysitter's friends coming over and about the babysitter talking on the phone while watching your children.
- Check in on them:
 - Make surprise visits.
 - Ask your children about what happens when a babysitter is there and whether they like him or her. If they don't like the babysitter, ask for reasons. Never leave your children with someone they don't feel comfortable with. Follow these guidelines even if the babysitter is a member of your family.

Guidelines for Choosing Childcare or After-School Care

Check out the care by:

- Making a visit.
- Observing the group.
- Asking questions.
- Talking to other parents.
- Requesting and following up on references.

Check credentials and other information:

- Is it licensed? If not, why? Licensing records are open to the public, so you can see a copy at the local records office.
- What are the qualifications of the staff? Are background checks done on them? A background check ensures that a staff member has no criminal record, especially for sexual offences against children.
- Do they have insurance?
- Has any parent ever filed a complaint against them? If so, why, and how did the center respond to it?

Check out the physical space:

- Is it clean? Are there enough bathrooms? Are there adult-only bathrooms?
- Is it safe? Is the playground open to the public, or is it a secure area?

Check out the staff:

- Are they warm and nurturing? How do they discipline the children?
- What is their training? Do they know about child development?
- What is the adult-child ratio?
- How are staff supervised?

Ask about activities and routines:

- How do staff handle diapering and toilet needs of young children?
- What do the children do all day?

Once you choose a program, monitor by:

- Volunteering.
- Going on field trips.
- Making surprise visits.
- Talking to your children.