

## Protecting Your Child from Abuse While in Someone Else's Care



There are many things you should consider before choosing a child care provider. The following guidelines can help you determine if a program will provide quality care for your children. Don't be shy about asking questions. The best caregivers have nothing to hide and expect you to ask about their services.

### Before hiring a baby-sitter or enrolling your children in nursery school, day care, pre-K, or camp:

- Check the reputation of the caregiver, even if it is someone you know.
- Be sure that parents are welcome to visit at any time. If not, choose another provider. If so, drop in every few days, unannounced.
- If there is more than one staff member, ask the director of the program about the hiring process. What are the requirements? Are backgrounds checked?
- Get at least two references from the caregiver. Check all references you get. Talk to parents of the kids already enrolled in the program.
- Visit the caregiver with your child. Ask about the program. Discuss the caregiver's methods for disciplining children.
- Observe how the caregiver interacts with your child and other children. Does the caregiver maintain control of the children and if so, how? The caregiver should be a warm and energetic person who easily connects with children.
- Find out what activities are available for your child throughout the day. There may be a schedule. Check out the toys, play equipment, books and materials that are there to keep the children busy. Are play areas clean and clear of hazards?

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- Tour the building, inside and out.** If you are not allowed in some sections or rooms, choose another facility. The facility should be clean and well organized.
- Check to see if the facility has a parents' advisory board.** If so, call the board and find out what recommendations they have made in the past. Has the provider followed through with them? If they don't have an advisory board, why not start one?

### Once you have chosen a child care provider:

- Make it clear that your child is not to leave the center,** home or school without your written permission. Never sign a blank permission slip.
- Insist that your child never leave at the end of the day with anyone but you.** Tell the caregiver that you will provide written notice if someone else is to pick up your child.
- When you pick up your child,** ask about his or her day. Does your child seem excited and content about how things went?
- If your child is upset about being left with the caregiver,** ask why. Never assume your child is just being difficult.
- Communicate with other parents.** Talk with them about their experiences with the child care provider. Discuss any problems that may arise.

**Special note on baby-sitters:** The best way to check on a teenager or adult that is coming into your home to watch your children is to talk with other parents who have used the sitter. Ask your kids which sitters they like and why.

Adapted by Prevent Child Abuse New York from materials provided by the Commissioner's Task Force on Child Abuse. Chairman: Robert J. Stone. Onondaga County Department of Social Services