

Child Care Choices:
A Focus on Nanny Necessities: Communication is Key

Child caregivers beginning a new position are entering an unfamiliar environment, which they might find overwhelming and intimidating. Consider ways that you can help the caregiver feel more comfortable and safe. Consider keeping a few special snacks around, providing space for extra clothing in a drawer. In other words, doing whatever you can for your caregiver to feel at home while at work.

- Take a tour of your home and point out the location of telephones, first aid equipment and exits. Helpful forms are available online that you can print out for emergency contact information, medical/insurance information and parental authorization for emergency medical treatment.
- Discuss any emergency escape plans such as where back doors lead and meeting location outside the apartment, etc.
- Give the caregiver a list of emergency telephone numbers: yours, friends or neighbors, emergency services. Post them in a spot that the caregiver can easily find.
- Explain how major appliances work.
- Let the caregiver know how to contact you: Write down where you will be and your cell phone number.
- Explain what medications should be given to your child, how, and where the medications are kept
- Review guidelines regarding feeding, naptime, bedtime, computer and television time.
- For babies, discuss the baby's pacifier, blanket or comfort toy, when/how you want your baby picked up, fed, and diapered.
- Explain any challenging behavior your child might exhibit as well as how you would want the behavior addressed by your caregiver.
- Alert the caregiver to any food allergies your child/ren might have. Post these allergies near places where food is kept.

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- Inform the caregiver where you have an extra key in case the caregiver gets locked out of the house.
- Leave a list of activities that your children would like and where the supplies, toys etc. can be found.
- Discuss if the caregiver can use your phone to make phone calls, and which foods are available for the caregiver to eat. Be clear that smoking and alcohol are not permitted at any time.
- Allow time for the caregiver to ask you questions.
- Model good behavior for your caregiver and children: be home on time! This shows respect for the caregiver's time and can be assuring to your child. If you are going to be late, it is crucial that you call and inform the caregiver.
- Ask the caregiver how things went, especially bedtime, meals or any disciplinary problems.

On the first days of work, consider spending the days at home with your caregiver to develop strong communication and comfort and to orient the caregiver to your child, your home and your expectations. Spending time with your caregiver sends a message that you are interested in building a relationship and that you hope that your caregiver will feel confident enough to tell you everything. Let the caregiver know that you don't expect the caregiver to be perfect, but if she feels that she makes a mistake or forgets something it is important to tell you as you expect a relationship based upon honesty.