

Checking References for an In-Home Caregiver for your Child

An important part of hiring an in home caregiver is checking the caregiver's work experience before hiring.

Even if you are considering a caregiver who is applying for a first care giving position, you should ask for references.

The typical caregiver will have two references that have already agreed to serve as such in the hiring process. First time caregivers might use a parent or teacher, since they haven't yet had the chance to establish a relationship with an employer.

The caregiver should provide you with both the phone numbers and email addresses of references so that you can contact them easily. The following is a list of tips and questions to help make you more comfortable with this process.

The Phone Call: Introduction

Introduce yourself and explain why you are calling. Don't forget to say that the caregiver referred you.

In some cases the reference might not be comfortable speaking with you or did not agree to be a reference. This is probably not a good sign and you should remove this person from your potential caregiver list.

Questions for References

If the reference seems happy to speak with you, the following list of questions will help you gauge your potential caregiver's talents. As a courtesy, try to keep your questions brief.

How well do you know the caregiver?

In what capacity did the caregiver work for you?

How long did the caregiver work for you?

What were the caregiver's best qualities?

What were the caregiver's worst qualities?

How did your children like the caregiver?

Did the caregiver have a routine when working with your children?

On a scale from 1-5 how would you rate the following qualities in the caregiver? (Use 5 as highest rating)

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|---------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| • Flexibility | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • Maturity | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • Patience | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • Timeliness | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| • Energy | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

How much supervision did the caregiver need?

How did the caregiver follow directions?

In what areas could the caregiver improve?

Why did you stop working together?

Would you hire the caregiver again?

What else did the caregiver do besides child care?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

Beyond the Basic Answers

When doing a phone reference check, you don't have a lot to go by other than the person's voice and assurance on the phone. So ask YOURSELF a few questions:

Did the reference sound nervous?

Does anything not feel quite right?

You can tell a lot simply from how a person's voice makes you feel, which is why we recommend the phone interview rather than exchanging emails. Rely on your own gut instinct, and take comfort knowing that each phone call takes you one step closer to priceless peace of mind. Feel free to consult with the staff of the Columbia School and Child Care Search Service at any time during this process.