

CHOOSING A SAFE CAREGIVER - A GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND FAMILIES

		HIRED	GROUP	FAMILY
P Prevention & Body Safety	Talk with caregivers about abuse prevention and build the foundation at home by teaching kids the correct anatomical names for their body parts, the difference between a secret and a surprise, and body autonomy. Children should know how safety feels & sounds. For children who are not mobile, remember: If they can't cruise, they can't bruise.	Ask how they handle privacy, bathroom, and bathing. Comfort with the topic is a green flag. Discomfort or dismissiveness is worth noting.	Ask for the written child-protection policy, and how staff are trained to handle diapering, toileting, private care, and unwanted behavior.	Normalize saying your rules out loud. "In our house we don't use physical punishment and we don't do secrets."
R Red flags & Resentment	Red flags in any setting: discourages your drop-ins, wants alone time with your child, pushes past your boundaries, singles one child out, introduces secrecy, lying, or resentment. For children who are not mobile, remember: If they can't cruise, they can't bruise. Resentment stacked on stress it is the mix that most often precedes harm.	Resentment sounds like irritation that feels personal, sighing or eye-rolling at ordinary needs, or complaints about your child that carry an edge. Notice anyone who treats your requests as an inconvenience, or who talks about your child as "too much."	Red flags: a program that resists unannounced visits, stays vague about its policies, or treats your questions as a nuisance. High staff turnover, staff who seem burned out or short with children, adults who speak with irritation in front of the kids, or children who are ignored rather than engaged.	Be wary of a relative who dismisses your rules as unnecessary, keeps secrets with your child, or singles one child out. Resentment can sound like jealousy over the time, money, or attention your child requires, comments that your child is spoiled or too much, or frustration that caring for them is an imposition.
O Open & Observable	Safe adults welcome your eyes. People who intend harm need access, secrecy, and isolation.	Interview in person, bring your child into the meeting, and watch them together before you decide. Consider using nanny-cam devices. Drop in unannounced. How does your child feel or act after the caregiver leaves?	Insist on an open-door policy where you can drop in any time. Tour in person and watch staff treat children. What adults will be interacting with your child?	Watch how your child behaves while in their care and afterward. Before they start, consider using nanny-cam devices.
T Temperament	Ask the caregiver how they handle stress, what they do when a baby will not stop crying, and how they remain calm when a child is at their hardest.	Ask directly: "What do you do when a baby won't stop crying?" Listen for calm and a willingness to step away when needed. Ensure the caregiver clearly understands and employs your approach to unwanted behavior with toddlers and older kids.	Ask about staff-to-child ratios and how they support staff through hard moments. Overwhelmed, understaffed, and/or under-supported adults are a safety concern. Be sure you clearly understand, and accept, their approach to unwanted behavior.	Ask directly: "What do you do when a baby won't stop crying?" Listen for calm and a willingness to step away when needed. Ensure the caregiver clearly understands and employs your approach to unwanted behavior with toddlers and older kids.
E Environment & Everyday Safety	Step back and read the whole picture: the quality of supervision, other adults who may interact with your child, whether the setup keeps your child visible and protected rather than isolated, the safety of the space: baby-proof? Clean? Pools, medications, firearms, & stairs properly guarded?	Verify their driver's license, insurance, and a clean driving record. Demonstrate correct car seat use and remind that the car seat is to be used every time they are in the vehicle, regardless of distance.	Look at the sightlines. Is there anywhere a child could be alone with one adult, unseen? Ask how field-trip transport is handled. Are children engaged & happy?	Verify their driver's license, insurance, and a clean driving record. Demonstrate correct car seat use and remind that the car seat is to be used every time they are in the vehicle, regardless of distance.
C Credentials & References	Verify that they actually have the training and experience the role needs. Check references by asking open-ended questions. You are looking for stories about how they handled various situations, not adjectives ("they're great!").	Verify CPR, first aid, safe sleep practices, and real childcare experience. Ask to see certificates.	Are the teachers and facility properly licensed, accredited, and qualified? Read reviews and talk to current parents. Ask about staff turnover.	Verify CPR, first aid, safe sleep practices, proper feeding, and how to walk away when they need a minute.
T Trust your gut	Red flags are what you can see. Your gut is what you feel. If something feels off, that feeling is information. You never need proof, and you never need to justify choosing a different care option.	A candidate can look perfect on paper and still feel wrong. You can pass without explanation.	A place can be licensed and well-reviewed and still feel off to you. Keep looking.	This is the hardest place to honor your gut. Your child's safety outranks hurt feelings. "We're not comfortable with that."