



Resources for Child Caring

Raising the standard of care for children

When a Relative or Friend Provides Child Care

- **Make sure your relative wants to care for your child and isn't just doing it as a "favor" to you.** One indicator of quality care is that the child's caregiver wants to work with children. It's important to note that children don't necessarily fare any better with relatives or friends rather than with child care providers in centers or family child care homes. In fact, many relatives don't like being the family babysitter!
- **Let your relative know exactly what she/he can expect.** Be as considerate as you can. Let your neighbor, friend or family-member know promptly if your work schedule changes or you will be running late.
- **Provide toys and equipment that will keep your child happy and comfortable.** Some parents find it's a good idea to leave a few extra things at the relative's/friend's home – a box of toys, a potty, some clothes, extra sheets and blankets. Just because your child plays there occasionally now doesn't mean the home is prepared for full-time child care.
- **Take time to trade information.** Let your relative know how your child's day has gone before you leave, including information about whether the child is hungry or he's feeling sad or angry. You'll also want to know a little bit about what happened while you were gone when you pick up your child. Try to spend a minute or two talking about how things are going each day.
- **Work together to help make your relative's home a safe place for your child.** It may have been several years since your mother took care of a busy two-year old! Is her home "childproof"? This may take some tact. Even though the relative's children survived just fine, safety standards may have changed.
- **Remember to think about backup care.** Can you think of other family members, parents, neighbors or a friend from work who might be able to help if your relative isn't available? It's a good idea to talk with them ahead of time to find out if they might be able to fill in for you when you need them. Family members may not always be able to take care of your child, and it's best to be prepared.



- **Make sure your relative has medical information for your child** such as your doctor's phone number, insurance numbers and copies of prescriptions for medicine. In addition, be sure your caregiver knows how to reach you in case of an emergency. Don't assume a relative has all the specifics of your child's medical history.
- **Think about what you can do for your relative in return.** Every family works out a different arrangement. For example, your relative may not want to be paid, but still needs you to cover her expenses for taking care of your child. Can you help straighten up after your child? Maybe you can do something she can't or doesn't like to do herself, like home repairs, grocery shopping or extra errands.
- **Remember, everyone needs a break!** Once in a while you may want to have a high school student or neighbor come over so your relative can have a few hours off. It may also be a nice idea to set up a few different outings for your relative and your child. You might want to get them tickets to a movie or tell them about a party at the community center or story hour at the library.

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