

## Summer child care options

**S**chool is out and you need to find a caregiver for your school-age children. Or maybe you just want to find a part-time job while jobs are available. Or your September to June provider doesn't offer summer care - now what? There are a number of possibilities and you may have to be a little creative to make things work but the primary concern is that your children are safe and be with people who are responsible. This should always come before convenience.

Don't rule out a center or home provider just because there was no room during the winter or you didn't need care in the winter. Many providers serve parents who work in schools so there may be slots available when these families don't need summer care. Make some phone calls. And if you know teachers who have children in care during the school year, ask them who they use and call their provider. While you're at school, find out who some of the aids are and see if they might be interested in taking care of your children. It's a way for them to make some money and stay home with their own children so they may jump at the opportunity.

Perhaps you have a friend and/or neighbor who is also interested in working and you can swap children or share a babysitter in your home. Or think about combining children and hiring one sitter or caregiver for both families. Combining families will allow you to pay for a higher rate and thus attract a more experienced person.

Then there is the obvious - a high school or junior high school student. But this may turn out to be more difficult than expected for a number of reasons. How do you find a responsible student? What can you do to make the job attractive? And keep in mind that what you offer to pay them has to be competitive with other job opportunities. Perhaps a junior high student could care for your child or children in his or her own home when another adult is present. Ideas for locating interested students include organizations that may have offered babysitting classes:

- Local YMCA ■ Colleges ■ High Schools
- Junior High Schools ■ Red Cross
- 4 H programs ■ Churches
- Scouting Groups
- Local Resource & Referral Agencies (The Family Resource Connection can give you numbers for the Resource & Referral Agencies. Call them at 271-7931 or 800-298-2205)
- Place an ad in the local newspaper
- Call local providers and summer rec programs and ask if they have names of people who have applied for jobs

### **Before hiring a person, find out:**

- If they are trained in CPR and First Aid? (If not, is there a neighbor available in an emergency or can they take a class?)
- What would they do in a medical emergency?
- Have they had any formal education in child development? If not, what should they know about your child?
- Do they have their own transportation?
- How do they plan to spend the day? Are they capable of planning activities?
- Do they have an adult they can contact in an emergency if they are unable to reach you?

If you have been successful in finding someone, there is still more work to do. Communication will be critical in making this a successful

relationship. Have the caregiver come to your home, or where ever they will be caring for your children, while you are there. Observe how they interact with your children and make suggestions to make the "getting to know you" period a little more comfortable for everyone. Tell them a little bit about your children before they arrive so that they know what to expect.

### **Information you need to share with them in writing:**

- Emergency phone numbers.
- A number where you can be reached.
- Address and phone number of your house should they need to call 911. This should be posted by all phones.
- Names and birthdates of children they are caring for.
- Any allergies children may have, and other medical information they should know about.
- Which appliances are they allowed to use? This may depend on age and maturity of caregiver. Do you want them to use the stove, the microwave, or neither?
- Are they allowed to transport your children in their vehicle? If so, do they have adequate insurance on their vehicle? How many years have they been driving? What is their driving record?
- If you allow them to drive with your children, show them how car seats are to be correctly used.

### **Things you should do ahead of time to make their job easier:**

- Prepare meals or at least have ingredients and clear, easy directions ready. Remember, the more you expect them to do, the less they will be watching and interacting with your children. Suggest ways your children can help with meal preparation and clean up.
- Write down clear rules regarding TV and movies, computer use, bike riding, naps and bedtime routines, having friends over.
- Leave a list of activities and games and have materials on hand for the day or week. Include your children in planning activities. Remember, a junior high or high school student is not an early childhood educator and may need some help in coming up with ideas and supplies.
- List clear discipline techniques and let your children know of consequences ahead of time if there are problems.
- Let your children know in front of the provider, what behaviors are expected and what is not acceptable.

Finally - leave with a smile on your face and send the message to your children that they are in competent hands and will have a good day. And please remember to thank your caregiver. He or she may do things differently than you do, the house may be a little messy, but if the children were well-cared for and had a good time, you can't ask for more!

*Information for this article was provided by Early Learning New Hampshire. The organization is committed to ensure that all New Hampshire children have the opportunity to reach their full potential by expanding access to affordable quality child care and early education, supporting the child care industry; building public-private partnerships; and helping families balance work and family. [www.earlylearningnh.org](http://www.earlylearningnh.org)*