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**The Anxiety of Hiring a Nanny: Tips for the Screening Process**

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Hiring a nanny is a process usually fraught with anxiety. Ideally, you want someone who shares your ideas on child rearing -- everything from feeding times, play dates, naps and discipline. It's a big decision. As a child protection expert, I'm often asked about the screening process for a nanny. Here are my suggestions:

**1. Define the role and expectations of the care provider.** Do you want someone that just stays at your home and watches your child(ren) or do you want someone who takes them to the park or drives them to their activities? Is the position part-time or full-time? Do you want a person to have flexibility to work extended hours or sleep over if you need to work late or travel? You should also determine if this person will cook meals, wash your child's laundry or perform other duties. What types of training would you require, such as CPR or First Aid? Determine the salary range and benefits that you intend to offer. A helpful website for legal requirements of hiring a nanny is [www.ehow.com](http://www.ehow.com).

**2. Start looking for candidates.** You can advertise on your own or go through an agency that provides nannies. Ideally, an agency is affiliated with the International Nanny Association ([www.nanny.org](http://www.nanny.org)). However, realize that going through a service means that you will pay a fee for the application and the placement. One helpful website is [www.eNannySource.com](http://www.eNannySource.com). It has an employment application and other resources that can be helpful through the hiring process.

**3. Interview the prospective nannies.** I recommend that you have a list of questions prepared and ask the same questions of each candidate. Take notes, as it's sometimes hard to keep who said what straight if you've interviewed several candidates. Some prefer to conduct first interviews over the phone and the second interview in person. This is your call. I believe you learn more about a person when you are engaged in a face to face conversation. On the top of the list you should ask them if they are legally permitted to work in the United States. After that is established, fire away with your questions.

**4. Ask Open Ended Questions.** Here are a few examples: Tell us about your work with children. Why did you decide to become a nanny? What are some of your favorite activities to do with infants/toddlers? What do you do when a child has a temper tantrum? What type of discipline techniques have you used? Please give me an example of how you handled a crisis/accident/injury with a child under your care. When you disagreed with your last employer, how did you resolve the issue?

Make sure that there is time for the candidate to ask you questions, too.

**5. Conduct a thorough reference check.** Do not rely on the nanny agency's background check as the final word -- conduct your own. Ask the prospective candidate for a list of past employers. Call them. Again, be prepared with a list of questions. When did she/he start to work for you? What was the age of your child(ren)? What did you like most about the nanny? How did she respond to your directions? How did she handle situations when you both disagreed? Was she dependable, on time, absent? Did she ever have to handle an emergency and if so, how did it go? Why did the nanny leave? Would you rehire her?

**6. Outsource other background check information.** You also want to verify her education and other work experience. I would also recommend a criminal background check. If she is going to be driving, you should also check her motor vehicle record. Make sure the candidate knows that you are going to conduct the background check and have her sign a statement authorizing you to do so. There are several on-line services that you can use such as [www.enannysource.com](http://www.enannysource.com) and [www.sterlingtesting.com](http://www.sterlingtesting.com). The International Nanny Association also lists members that conduct nanny background checks. The costs can vary based on the amount of information that you would like to find out. You also want to ask the nanny if she was ever the subject of a confirmed report of child abuse or neglect.

**7. Have the finalist meet your family.** After reviewing this information, you should have the finalist(s) return to meet with your family. Take close note of how the infant/child interacts with the nanny. Does the nanny seem comfortable/natural? Take note of your child's response to the nanny and if they are old enough, ask them for their opinion. You might want to schedule a trial run (paid) for a day or two before you make an offer. Trust your instincts. If you don't think it's a good fit, keep looking. If it seems to be a good pairing, then move forward with the negotiations!

For more information on keeping your child safe visit [www.nyspcc.org](http://www.nyspcc.org).