



JANE BROWN
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In Home - Au Pairs and Nannies

In-home care is care that is provided in your home by a caregiver who you hire – usually a nanny or au pair, or in some cases a “mother’s helper”. In-home care is not for everyone. It is usually expensive, hard to find, and does not provide for an emergency backup. Caregivers may or may not have training in child development. In addition, you may not feel comfortable becoming an employer, providing supervision and being responsible for taxes associated with the employment of a caregiver.

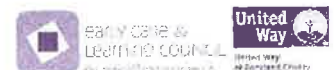
While in-home care does offer a great deal of flexibility, one drawback is that your child may miss out on peer interaction. You can address this problem by setting up play dates and playgroups for your child.

Finding the right in-home caregiver takes time and patience. You need to evaluate the caregiver’s qualifications, check references and meet with a candidate several times. Most of all, you need to feel comfortable with the person and feel that he or she is committed to providing the best care for your child. Trust your instincts. No matter how high a recommendation from someone else, your own screening and interviewing is your best security. Once you have chosen your in-home caregiver, it is a good idea to draw up a contract that outlines the legal responsibilities of your child care arrangement.

Au Pairs

An au pair lives with a family for one year, providing limited child care and sometimes light household help in exchange for room and board, a stipend and the opportunity to experience life in another community or country. It is a specialized arrangement that requires you to consider not merely your child care needs, but your entire family’s living arrangements. With foreign au pairs, there are strict regulations about how much time they can spend on children and other requirements for families, such as the payment of one college course per year. Agencies that make placements of au pairs do provide

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some training, but it is important to know that many au pairs have little child development training.

Placement Agencies

Child Care Resources of Rockland has information on several placement agencies that serve Rockland County. Some agencies specialize in child care placements while others offer child care as one of a number of domestic services, such as housekeeping or elder care. Some agencies recruit caregivers exclusively for live-out or live-in positions, some for both. Those that focus on live-in care recruit providers from around the country or abroad.

The agency's main task is to match families with appropriate caregivers. They are there to guide you through each step of the process, from defining and clarifying your needs through an adjustment period, to assisting you by addressing any concerns you may have and by helping you make the relationship work.

In-home care is a costly form of care. If you choose to work with an agency, in addition to weekly salary, an agency fee will be assessed. The fee for placement of live-out and live-in caregivers varies from agency to agency and is usually based on a percentage of the caregiver's salary (for example, 10%) or the equivalent of the caregiver's first two to six weeks of pay. Agencies may also charge non-refundable registration fees or, once a contract is signed, refundable deposit.

It is possible that the caregiver you hire to work with you may not work out as you had hoped. A good agency will have a clearly stated policy on refund of the finder's fee or replacement caregiver. Policies vary from agency to agency. Be sure to ask the agency for their policy in writing and determine if you are comfortable with the policy before you work with them.

Questions to consider when selecting an agency:

- What are the agency's procedures for assuring a good match between you and your caregiver? For example, does the agency staff have a lengthy interview process in that they ask you several questions about your family, your children and your job requirements? In speaking with them do they make suggestions to help you clarify expectations?
- Are you comfortable with the agency's style? Most agencies conduct the interview on the phone; however, some offer the option of a face-to-face meeting. How do you feel about working with an agency that gathers information through a written questionnaire?
- Do you feel comfortable with the person you will be working with at the agency? Does he or she listen carefully to what you say and seem to care about your unique situation?
- How long has the agency been in business? What does the agency say about their record for successful placements?
- What are the agency's standards and procedures for recruiting and screening applicants for child care positions? How old do applicants have to be? What kind of education training is required or desired? How much and what kind of child care experience do caregivers have? Are all candidates legally able to work in the U.S.? Will the agency have met the caregivers being referred to you? Has the company verified at least three references for each applicant? Can you get copies of written references, names and phone numbers of any or all verbal references to confirm the information provided in background checks conducted, and if so, what do these checks cover?
- It is important to check references. Are there families with whom the agency has worked with that you can call as references? Ask them: How was the search? How appropriate were the applicants referred by the agency? Did the agency represent themselves accurately to the family with whom they were working? What was their experience? Would they work with them again if they needed to hire a new caregiver?

Additional Resources

New York State Department of Labor
(518) 457-9000

This agency licenses and regulates private employment agencies, including au pair agencies

NYC Department of Consumer Affairs, Division of Consumer Protection
(800) 697-1220

Better Business Bureau, Consumer Hotline
(212) 533-6200

Post an Advertisement in Your Local Newspaper

You may locate a nanny or in-home caregiver on your own, through ads in the Help Wanted section or local or college newspapers such as the *Pennysaver*. The best times to place ads are on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays. More people are inclined to read the classified ads over the weekend. If you advertise in a major paper like *Newsday* or *The New York Times*, be prepared for a large response. Limiting the area in which people may call you is a good idea. You may also want to consider using a post office box instead of your phone number.

Ask Friends or Associates

Often other parents can refer you to someone that they have used before or friends of their in-home caregiver.

Local Colleges or Universities

This is especially good if you are looking for part-time care. Students' class schedules are usually flexible. Often students are looking to do child care in exchange for room and board. Temporary full-time summer care is also an option for students. Many colleges have a Career Services office and will post your child care requirements on their employment bulletin board.

Locating Babysitters

The most frequently used method of locating babysitters is word-of-mouth from relatives and friends. Talk to everyone you know about who they use. Although some parents are reluctant to share the name of their favorite sitters for fear of making them less available for their own family, more share any “extra” names that they have. If this is the case, make sure to ask if they ever actually used these sitters and how they liked them.

Since most babysitters are teenagers, it is a good idea to start your search where teenagers are:

- Call the Junior and Senior High School Guidance Offices. They often have job placement services.
 - Contact the local churches, synagogues, scout troops, 4-H Clubs, Y's, libraries, Youth Organizations and fire departments. Many of these organizations offer babysitting classes and keep a list of interested teens.
 - Put up notices at local supermarkets, libraries and local community colleges.
 - Advertise in the Help Wanted section of your local paper. The *Pennysaver* is a good source. Be sure to include the age(s) of your child and the neighborhood in which you live.
 - Call your local Senior Citizen's Center and see if you can post a notice on the bulletin board.
 - Check with local hospitals and nursing schools. Many times student nurses babysit during their off-hours.
 - Advertise on bulletin boards or in newspapers at the local colleges.
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