

BANANAS HANDOUT

Your Rights and Responsibilities as an Employer of an In-Home Caregiver

Initial Phone Contact With Applicants: Follow common telephone etiquette. Your contact phone number from your job listing should have voice mail or an answering machine. Speak slowly on your outgoing message and be sure to include your name and a good time to reach you, or another number where you can be reached. When an applicant leaves a message, always return the call as soon as possible even if you are no longer looking for someone. When you call an applicant, leave a clear, detailed message; give your name and contact telephone number as well as a good time to reach you. Prepare a brief list of questions to ask during the initial phone call with the applicant so both of you can decide if an interview is appropriate.

Interviews: Conduct interviews in a professional manner. For sample questions see our handout, "Where and How to Look for a Caregiver to Work in Your Own Home." For the interview, you can invite the applicant to your home or meet at a local coffee shop or restaurant. If the caregiver's native language is other than English, you might suggest using an interpreter or meeting in the caregiver's home; keep telephone communication to a minimum. Develop a timetable so that you can inform applicants in a timely manner whether or not you will hire them. If you require more than one in-person interview and a probationary period, pay the caregiver for her time and work. **Note:** BANANAS handouts are available at our office, by mail or from our website.

Reference Checks: It is very important to check references carefully. Ask for the names and telephone numbers of at least three references. Examples of questions to ask are: "When and how long did the caregiver work for you? How old were your children? Why did she leave? Would you hire her again or does she still do occasional work for you?" Additionally, if she is in TrustLine, California's background registry for in-home child care providers, you can call (800) 822-8490, to check for any criminal convictions or substantiated child-abuse reports against the applicant. If the caregiver is not registered, you could offer to pay the registration fee – \$124 or \$134, depending on how fingerprints are submitted. Finally, if the caregiver will be driving your children, have her provide a copy of her driving record from the Department of Motor Vehicles.

Business Practices: Everything should be stated clearly *in writing*. Copies of the completed contract go to both

parties. The contract should include all information related to hiring, compensation, dates and times of employment, as well as the particular rules and regulations about the job. The most frequent complaints and problems we hear at BANANAS arise from unclear and/or unstated job requirements.

Any changes that you want to make to the original contract or job description should be discussed in advance with the caregiver and then put in writing as an attachment to the contract, after being signed by both parties. Requests for changes by the caregiver should be handled as soon as possible. The "Where and How to Look for a Caregiver..." handout includes a sample employment contract.

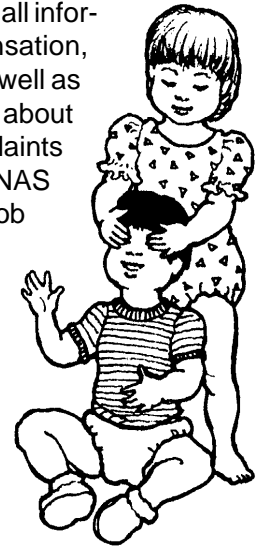
As an employer, you face some complicated tax requirements. For more information, see BANANAS' handout, "Financial Facts About Caregivers Who Work In Your Home."

Additional Considerations:

- A trial period for getting to know each other and developing a working relationship.
- A plan for working together for several hours to learn about each other's style.
- Guidelines for vacations and part-time or additional hours.
- A plan for illness of the child and/or the caregiver.
- Procedures for resolving difficulties.

Housekeeping: Generally, major cleaning is not included in a child care job. Domestic chores typically included are: cooking for the children and cleaning up after them, doing the children's laundry and straightening up after the children play. If you are going to require additional household chores, or child care beyond the specified hours, extra pay should be negotiated.

Communication: Develop a strong day-by-day relationship with your children's caregiver. Communicate about daily activities and events in your child's life, either verbally, or by writing to one another in a notebook, bulletin board or binder.



The transfer of authority from one adult to another is very important for a successful caregiving arrangement. To ease this process, parents need to show and express their trust and confidence in the caregiver to their children. If you are able to build this trust day-by-day, then the inevitable difficulties will be easier to handle.

In addition to daily talks, set up a regular biweekly or monthly meeting time with the provider. You could pay your caregiver for an extra hour before or after care to meet in a more relaxed manner and share how everything is going. See BANANAS' handouts, "Child Care Issues for New and Expectant Parents" and "Separating from Infants and Toddlers" for more information.

Emergency Procedures: All emergency procedures for the home need to be in writing and, if possible, in the caregiver's native language. The caregiver should have up-to-date verbal and written instructions. Make sure that all telephone numbers are clearly posted. Stage an emergency drill to be sure the caregiver understands the information. Clarify under what circumstances you want to be contacted at work. Make sure you have a clear procedure for the provider to reach you quickly, and practice this procedure. Introduce your caregiver to the neighbors, and plan for a back-up person in the event that you cannot be reached. You can call BANANAS for translation help; we have staff who speak Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Mien, Amharic, Vietnamese, Thai, Tigrigna and Laotian. We also have "How to Use 911" handouts in Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese to help caregivers use the 911 system. Other handouts on emergency preparedness include: "Stop, Drop and Roll – Family Fire Safety," "Earthquake Safety Rules" and "Preparing for an Emergency – Information for In-Home Caregivers" (available in English, Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese).

Health and Safety Practices: Family members and the caregiver should adhere to basic health precautions such as frequent hand-washing. Child-proof your home with attention to detail and to the age of your child. Take a look at BANANAS' handout, "Safety Factors to Check for in a Family Child Care Home." While written for child care providers, this handout can help you correct hazards around your own home. Provide information to the caregiver about your child's medical history, including allergies and any medications which need to be given. BANANAS has a "Sample Medical Authorization Form" to authorize medical care in the parents' absence. Our "Common First Aid" handout gives simple instructions for basic emergencies. We also recommend that caregivers be certified for first-aid and CPR. Call our office for information about our CPR and first-aid training classes.

Medical Policy: As part of the hiring process, you can require a medical examination and TB test, especially if you are willing to pay for them. You can also require that

the applicant fill out a medical history form. It's best to inform her that misrepresentation of an illness could result in immediate termination.

Sickness Policies: Illness is inevitable. Be sure to clarify when the child or the caregiver is too ill for care and when it will be necessary to make alternative arrangements. You should also clarify that the caregiver needs to be physically able to perform her duties if she comes to work. Discuss your payment policy if either the provider or child becomes ill – especially if you are going to stay home to care for your sick child yourself.

Personal Issues: Explain your rules regarding telephone usage, food, personal space (if any), TV viewing, how you prefer the caregiver to dress, etc. Address rules about visitors or friends for either the caregiver and/or your child. For example, do you want older children to have after-school play-dates? Before your caregiver starts work, give a tour of the house, including the areas that will be off-limits to the provider and/or the children. You may want to give the caregiver a tour or a map of nearby parks or libraries and suggestions for taking the children on outings. Include policies about your children riding in the caregiver's car or usage of your own car. If the provider will use her car, provide an extra car seat for all children who are under 60 pounds or up to six years of age.



Child Development and Child Rearing Issues: You and your caregiver may not always agree on such basic issues as limit-setting, toileting, fresh air and exercise, feeding and sleeping. BANANAS' handout, "Employing a Limited-English Speaking Caregiver" discusses

these issues from a cross-cultural point of view. However, no two people agree on every aspect of child rearing – whether they share the same culture or not. Discuss with your caregiver how she would handle common child-rearing situations. Then share your beliefs and, if need be, explain that you expect the caregiver to follow your guidelines. For example, if the caregiver uses discipline methods you don't agree with, be sure to suggest alternatives, such as "redirection" or logical consequences. In turn, make sure your children understand that you expect them to respect the caregiver and follow her rules.

Caregiver's Confidentiality and Rights: Keep personal exchanges with your caregiver confidential. Caring for children is demanding work. Encourage your caregiver to take breaks (while the children nap, for example). You want your provider to know that s/he is a respected professional, a partner in the care of your child, not a servant. Keep this in mind in all your interactions. Show appreciation for the care being given your child. Let your caregiver know that you value her role in your family.