

BANANAS HANDOUT

Your Rights and Responsibilities as an In-Home Caregiver Employee

Caring for Children – Caregiving is an important job. An in-home caregiver needs to be mature, responsible, reliable, thoughtful, patient, creative, diplomatic and caring. Being professional about your job will earn you the parents' and the children's respect.

Initial Phone Contact – While searching for a job, it is important to follow a certain telephone etiquette.

- Your contact phone number (the one you put on job applications or flyers) should be linked to an answering machine or voice mail.
- Your outgoing greeting should include your name and a good time to reach you or an alternative number to call.
- Ask members of your household to take detailed messages, including a return phone number and the name of the caller.
- When a parent leaves a message, always call back as soon as possible even if you are no longer available.
- When you call about a job, leave a clear, detailed message; give your name and contact telephone number, as well as good times to reach you.
- Do not call late at night or early in the morning.
- Prepare a list of questions for the initial phone call with the parent so both of you can decide if an interview is appropriate.

Interviews – Collect your personal information, including at least three references (be sure to call them first) before you go to an interview. If you need help with translation, discuss this with the parent and arrange to bring someone with you for the interview. Get clear directions and arrive on time. Be yourself and answer the parent's questions honestly. Prepare responses for questions such as, "What activities do you like to do with children?" or, "How would you handle a child who refuses to nap?" Remember to bring your own questions to the interview as well. It is important to be confident and to do a little "selling" of yourself to parents. Tell them what is special about your skills, interests, background or experience. Pay attention to the child if s/he is present – smile, talk to, play with, or ask to hold the child. These are all good ways to show parents how you work with children.



TrustLine – Parents might ask whether you are registered with TrustLine. This is California's listing of in-home child care providers who have cleared a fingerprint screening to prove they have no criminal record. If you're not registered, discuss who should pay the fee (approximately \$130). Call (800) 822-8490 for information on how to register, or call BANANAS to get the application.

Business Practices – Discuss the specifics of the job (hours and days, pay, job duties) and what you would like to include in the contract. A contract is a two-way document outlining the rights and responsibilities for both the parents and the caregiver.

- Use the sample contract in BANANAS' handout, *Where and How to Look for a Caregiver to Work in Your Home* (available in Spanish as *Ejemplo de un Contrato*).
- Be sure the contract covers all important aspects of the job.
- Don't commit to anything you feel uncomfortable about or don't understand. For example, you may prefer not to do laundry or cooking for the family.
- Bring up the subject of employer taxes and social security if the parent doesn't.
- Find out if you will be paid for vacation time and sick leave, either yours or the family's.
- Discuss how much advance notice either party should give before going on vacation.
- It's a good idea to set an initial trial period (two to three weeks) to allow either side to end the contract without bad feelings.

Communicating with Parents – Communicate daily with parents about their children. Work out a system with the parents to accomplish this verbally, in writing, or both. Call BANANAS and ask about our *Daily Report Train* – a special note-pad, available in English, Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese, to help parents and limited English speakers to communicate basic information about a baby's day. Write down and date any unusual incidents, especially injuries or observations. Clarify under what circumstances you should contact the parent at work. Make sure you know how to reach the parents quickly in case of an emergency. Set aside a regular meeting time to cover all aspects of the child's care, not just in response to problems. If problems do arise and you need to discuss them with the parent, ask for a good time to talk things over.

Child Development and Childrearing – You and the parents may have different ideas about childrearing. It is extremely important for you and the parents to discuss expectations about eating, sleeping, toileting, setting limits, etc. Clarify parents' expectations about the care of their children and develop your own plans to meet those expectations. Read BANANAS' handout, *Baby Briefs*, for child development guidelines and suggested activities for children aged 0-2 years (available in English, Chinese, Spanish and Vietnamese). For more information, see our handouts, *Exploring the Senses with Infants and Toddlers* (available in English, Chinese and Spanish) and *What Babies and Toddlers Need in Child Care*.

Emergency Procedures – Obtain the following emergency telephone numbers **before** starting to care for a child: doctors, parents' work and/or cell phones, and backup emergency person. Know whom to call and where to go in case of an emergency. Always have this information in writing and carry it with you on outings.

Ask about the family's emergency plans in case of earthquake, fire, etc. BANANAS' handouts, *Preparing for an Emergency – Information for In-Home Caregivers*; *Common First Aid*; and *How to Use 911*, will help you respond to emergencies.



Health and Safety Issues – Discuss procedures for keeping children safe before you assume responsibility for a child.

- Clarify who is allowed into the house.
- An insurance certificate should be in any car the children ride in.
- Children who are under 4'9" tall must **always** ride in a child safety seat or booster seat. Children age 13 and under should always ride in the back seat.
- Make sure you understand any special health or dietary needs of children in your care.
- Ask the parent to provide any necessary materials, such as medical release forms and first-aid materials.
- Alert the parent if you notice anything unsafe (uncovered plugs, unlocked cabinets, expired medicines) and ask that these items be fixed or replaced.
- Practice using keys, security alarms, telephones, etc.

See other BANANAS' handouts on common health and safety issues, *Promoting Health and Hygiene*; *Red Light, Green Light*; and *Stop, Drop and Roll* (available in English, Chinese, Spanish and Vietnamese). In addition, BANANAS offers training in CPR and First Aid in English, Chinese, Spanish and Vietnamese. Call our office for dates and times.

Sickness Policies – Illness is inevitable. Have a clear understanding of what to do when a child becomes sick during the day and when to call the parent. Also be clear on when to contact the parent if *you* are too sick to work. Establish guidelines for payment for when you are sick, on finding substitute care (you or the parent), and what procedures to follow when the parent stays home sick with you and the children. It is also your responsibility to inform parents as soon as possible if you are running late.

Additional Issues – Be sure you understand the family's rules about telephone usage, food, personal space (if any), TV viewing, visitors or friends, dress, accepted children's activities, language spoken to the children (English or your native language if it's other than English), etc. Before you begin any job, tour the house and ask the parent to identify areas that are off-limits to you and/or the children. Also discuss how to inform parents about any trips you take with the child outside the home.

Respect the Family's Privacy – Because the employment takes place in a home, there will be many personal exchanges which should be kept in strict confidence. You may also learn private information about the parents by spending time in their home and with their possessions. You should not share any personal information about the family with anyone else.

Caring for Yourself – Taking good care of children is very hard work. Remember to respect your physical limitations in order to avoid injuries. Often caregivers find that after a long day of talking, caring for and being *only* with children, they feel isolated and unappreciated. The more you are able to understand your own needs, the more you will be able to handle the rigors of the job. Try to forge a strong relationship with your employer and learn how to reach out to colleagues, peers and friends for support. Connect with other caregivers in your neighborhood for adult contact as well as for playmates for the children. BANANAS also hosts a free support group for in-home caregivers. Call us for dates and times of the next meeting.

For more information, call BANANAS at 658-7353, or visit our website, www.bananasinc.org. Handouts are available at our office, by mail, or by downloading from our website. Many of our written publications on child care and working as a child care provider are also available in Chinese, Spanish and Vietnamese. In addition, we have people on staff who speak many languages, including Amharic, Cantonese, Laotian, Mandarin, Mien, Spanish, Thai, Tigrigna and Vietnamese. **Good luck in your work!**