

# The Importance of Creating Your Child Care Agreement

## **Introduction**

A child care agreement or contract is important for setting and agreeing on child care expectations. When families choose to use formal child care, such as a licensed family child care home or a licensed child care center, the program often has a written agreement for the family to read and sign. However, when families are using an informal child care setting such as in-home care (e.g., a nanny, babysitter, friend or acquaintance providing care in the family's home), it is often the family's responsibility to share requirements and expectations. The following information can help families learn about why a written agreement is important for in-home child care and what information they may want to include.

## **Why Do I Need a Written Agreement?**

A written agreement for in-home child care can be important for many reasons.

First, everyone has their own caregiving and communication styles. It can be difficult to make sure that both the caregiver and the family understand and agree on child care responsibilities. Providing written guidance helps to lay out key details. This can include when and where child care will take place, child care times, children in care, child care rates, payment details, safety guidance, and child care rules. When covering payment details specifically, consideration should be given to the full child care rate, the responsibility of the family for the balance not covered by fee assistance (when eligible), and when that remaining balance will be paid.

Second, when both parties review and sign a written agreement, the family and the caregiver can have a level of protection or assurance. They can reference the agreement if there are questions or concerns about child care responsibilities, payments, or other areas of care.

Additionally, a written agreement can offer caregivers important guidance in case of an emergency. For example, the agreement could include a section on who to call first if a child is injured or what decisions the caregiver can make if a parent cannot be reached in an emergency.

Overall, a written agreement between a family and a caregiver can help avoid misunderstandings and miscommunication.

## **What Should Be Included?**

There are certain topics that families might always include in a written child care agreement. The basics may include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Start date of care
- Children to be cared for when there are multiple children in the family home
- Days and hours of care
- Where care will take place in the home
- Payment amount, frequency, and method
- Caregiver responsibilities
- Required certifications or trainings (ex. background checks, CPR, First Aid, safe sleep, accommodations for children with special needs, etc.)
- Grounds and notice for termination of employment

There are other important topics that families may want to include, but are not necessarily limited to:

- Handling of employee and employer taxes, social security, unemployment, Medicare, etc.
- Benefits provided, such as medical insurance or stipend, cell phone plan, etc.
- Time off, including sick leave, vacation days and holidays, and required notice when taking leave
- Transportation usage, needs, and safety; reimbursements for mileage, public transportation, or parking for daily activities or school pick-up and drop-off
- Emergency information and procedures and a medical release form for consent to treat the child if a parent can't be reached
- Procedures for special circumstances, e.g., when the provider is ill prior to scheduled care or becomes ill during care.
- House rules the caregiver should be aware of so that they can enforce, prompt, or assist as necessary, such as screen time rules or limitations, completing homework or chores, daily hygiene such as bathing and brushing teeth, etc.
- Approved, age specific activities, such as certain locations and activities that a child is permitted to visit or do, locations or activities that are off limits, and activities or destinations that require family permission ahead of time (e.g., outdoor play).
- General safety, nutrition, and health guidance; when the caregiver or child should stay home or go home early due to illness
- Safe infant sleep practices for a child under 12 month's old
- Accommodations and routines for children with special needs
- Discipline and guidance
- Confidentiality agreement
- Social media policy
- Reviews, communication of concerns, and raises
- Any other special details about the child(ren) that need to be considered during care, as well as specific expectations

### **Additional Resources**

Local Child Care Resource and Referral agencies (CCR&Rs) may have resources that support families and caregivers with in-home child care. [Find your local CCR&R agency.](#)

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