10 Things You Should Expect from Your Child Care Provider

Whether your child is cared for by a baby-sitter in your home, a family day-care provider in her home or a number of people in a child-care center, you should be able to expect certain things.

1. Open communication. Provider should give you frequent and full updates on your child’s progress and problems. They should welcome your questions and ask you questions about how they can help your child. If they let you know what is happening with your child during the day, you can develop ways to deal with problems and to build on activities and accomplishments of the day.

2. Open access to their home or center. Parents must be welcome to drop in any time, even without calling. Providers also should allow parents to make a reasonable number of phone calls to check on their children’s well-being, in case of illness or if there’s a special problem such as separation anxiety. You and the provider should work out the best times for such phone calls and determine how many calls are reasonable.

3. Safety for your child. Providers should take all possible precautions to keep children safe. This includes plugging light sockets, putting away knives and other sharp objects, closing off stairways and using only safe and well-maintained equipment, among other basic safety measures. It also includes always using child-safety seats and seat belts when transporting children in cars.

4. Honesty and confidence. Providers shouldn’t make commitments that they can’t or don’t intend to keep. They shouldn’t cover up problems or accidents that occur. They shouldn’t expect parents to help them avoid income taxes by slipping them money on the side. They also shouldn’t gossip about your child or your family to friends or coworkers.

5. Acceptance of parent’s wishes. Providers should abide by parent’s wishes on matters such as discipline, TV watching, food, adult smoking and toilet training. If parents do not want their children spanked, providers should not spank them. If parents don’t want anyone smoking around their child, the provider needs to see that no one smokes in the house when the child is present. If providers feel that they can’t abide by parent’s wishes, they need to tell parents before agreeing to care for the children and parents should look for other care.

6. Advance notice of any changes. Since it is often very difficult to find adequate care, providers should tell parents well in advance if they are going to change their hours or prices or if they are going to stop or limit the time of caring for a child. Parents need at least a month or, better yet, six week’s notice if a provider is no longer going to care for a child. Except in case of an emergency, parents should be given at least two weeks notice even if the provider won’t be available for just one day.

7. No interference in the child’s family or family problems. Providers shouldn’t talk to children about their families’ problems, lifestyle or values. Likewise, the provider should be careful not to take sides in any family disputes such as custody battles. Providers should not try to impose their religious or other beliefs on the children they care for. This includes not taking children to religious services unless asked to by the parents.

8. No advice offered unless asked for and no judging of parenting practices. Providers shouldn’t criticize or advise parents on child rearing unless their advice is asked for by the parents. They shouldn’t set themselves up as experts on parenting. If parents ask for advice, providers should offer it in a non-critical way. Of course, if providers see something that is seriously wrong with how parents are raising their children, such as if they fear child abuse or see a child apparently suffering from malnutrition, they should discuss the problem with the parents and, if needed, contact legal authorities.

9. Assurance that everyone in contact with the child is trustworthy and properly trained and supervised. Providers must be responsible for everyone who enters visits and works at their home or center. This includes screening custodial help, not admitting strangers to the home, seeing that all transportation workers are properly trained and that all visitors, including friends or relatives of the provider, are trustworthy and supervised and will not harm the child.

10. No surprises. This means that your family day-care provider won’t suddenly tell you that since she has taken a part-time job, her teenage daughter will watch your child three afternoons a week or that your child’s favorite teacher at the center just disappears without warning or comment. Surprises are probably what parents fear the most from their child-care providers. (Source is unknown)