

GUIDELINES FOR SELECTING A BABYSITTER

These guidelines were developed by social work professionals in collaboration with members of the community. They represent the minimal acceptable standards for selecting a responsible babysitter. Remember these are only guidelines. There may be some situations within these guidelines when it is not safe to leave a child with a babysitter. Parents are ultimately responsible for making decisions about their child's safety.

Major Considerations

- Generally, age 13 is the minimum recommended age for a babysitter. In making decisions about who is an acceptable babysitter, consider not only age, but maturity.
- The physical environment where the babysitting takes place must be safe.
- The babysitter must possess a level of maturity necessary to applying solid judgement and decision-making skills. There must be no emotional, medical or behavioral problems affecting this ability.
- The length of time, number of hours, age, number of children and the time of day must be consistent with the sitter's age and ability. As the age and level of maturity of the babysitter increases, so can the level of responsibility.
- The sitter should have access to a responsible adult who can offer assistance if necessary.
- The babysitter must know how and when to summon help and have a safety plan for what to do in emergency.

Other Considerations

- Is the sitter comfortable around children?
- Does the sitter possess basic childcare skills?
- Does the sitter show a responsible attitude?
- Could the sitter respond to any special medical needs your child may have?
- Does the sitter have experience with children?
- Does the sitter know basic first aid and CPR?
- Has the sitter demonstrated responsible behavior in the past?
- Does the sitter have references? Have you checked them out?

Before leaving your children with a babysitter, have you:

- Informed the sitter of your family's safety plan for emergency situations and ensured that the sitter is able to carry out the plan?
- Made expectations for food preparation and bathing realistic?
- Left a place and phone number where you can be reached?
- Reminded the sitter to limit personal phone calls and not allow visitors into the home?

Many hospitals, health care agencies, youth groups, community service groups and the American Red Cross provide classes for potential babysitters. Consistent with the Fairfax County Child Supervision Guidelines, no child under 16 years old should be left alone overnight. It is recommended that overnight sitters be 18 years or older.



Fairfax County Child Protective Services Hotline

703-324-7400 | TTY 703-222-9452

For information on child care resources, call 703-449-9555

