



# How Do I Find the Right Person to Care for My Child in My Home?

4Cs of Alameda County | [www.4calameda.org](http://www.4calameda.org)

When you hire a caregiver to come into your home – a nanny, babysitter, or au pair – **you're in charge!** You can arrange for the hours and type of care you need and make sure your child's care fits with your family's culture, values, and needs.

The responsibility is all yours, too. There are no state or federal regulations for this type of care. So it's up to you to choose carefully, check references, and check the person out on the state's Trustline service (See other side).

Hiring an in-home caregiver also makes you an employer. That gives you important legal and ethical responsibilities toward your employee. (See box.)

Here are some tips to help you find and work in partnership with an in-home caregiver:

## HOW DO I FIND A CAREGIVER?

### 1. CREATE A JOB DESCRIPTION

- Decide whether you want someone to come for certain hours or live in your home.
- Make a list of everything you want the person to do – and not to do! Decide on the hours you need care.
- Make a list of the benefits you will offer, such as vacation or sick days.



### 2. TRY SEVERAL WAYS TO FIND SOMEONE

- Look at ads in newspapers, parenting magazines, and message boards.
- Place your own help-wanted ad.
- Call 4Cs of Alameda County, 510-582-2182, to get phone numbers of nanny agencies in Southern Alameda County.

### 3. DO A PHONE SCREENING

- What experience has the person had with children your child's age? If you want her to do other tasks, like cooking, what is her experience with those?
- What are her salary requirements?
- Trust your instincts – only set up in-person interviews with people you have a good feeling about.

### 4. INTERVIEW HER IN PERSON

- Set up the interview at a time you can give it your full attention.
- Have your child with you so you can observe the caregiver's interaction with the child.
- Ask about her knowledge of young children.
- Ask her to tell you more about her previous experience.
- Check out her problem-solving skills – ask her to tell you about how she handled a specific challenge.

***As an employer, you will be responsible for filing payroll reports and paying payroll taxes. To find out how, see IRS Publication 926 at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)***

## WHEN YOU THINK YOU HAVE FOUND THE PERSON YOU WANT

- Check out her background information (see below).
- Pay her to spend a day with you and your child so you can observe how she interacts with the child and you can get to know her better.
- Agree on a “trial period” before making a long-term commitment.
- Create a contract listing exact hours, duties, things you do and do not want her to do, pay, and benefits.

### Check the person out!

1. **Check references** – Talk with previous employers.
2. **Ask to see the person’s DMV record** if she will be driving your child.
3. **Contact Trustline** for a background check (see below).

---

## Using Trustline

Trustline is the state’s authorized database of in-home caregivers. Caregivers listed in Trustline have been cleared through a fingerprint check with state and federal law enforcement, so they have no disqualifying criminal convictions or confirmed child abuse reports.

To check whether a person is listed in Trustline, call 800-822-8490. You will have to provide the person’s name and driver’s license number.

If the person you want is not already listed, you may request that she go through the Trustline process. She can apply at 4Cs, 510-582-2182.

More info about Trustline at 800-822-8490 or [www.trustline.org](http://www.trustline.org)

## TYPES OF IN-HOME CARE:

- A **nanny or babysitter** comes to your home to care for your child – or you may try to find someone who will live with your family.
- An **au pair** usually comes from another country and lives in the employer’s home, trading child care services for room and board.
- A **nanny agency** is an employment service that helps families find in-home caregivers. Some agencies provide some types of screening for the nannies they place. For information on Southern Alameda County nanny agencies, contact 4Cs at 510-582-2182.

---

## When the caregiver is a relative

When the caregiver is a member of your family, you may feel you don’t need to make a formal agreement – or you may feel embarrassed about asking. But with a relative it’s especially important to spell out expectations, to prevent misunderstandings or bad feelings.

- **Make a written agreement** about amount and time of payment, schedule of care, meals, daily schedule, discipline, safety, and any other important issues.
- **Communicate every day** about how the child’s day went. Have frequent discussions about how things are going and remember to express your appreciation.
- **Help her find resources and support.** Call 4Cs for suggestions.
- **Discuss differences respectfully.** Bring up problems when you are both relaxed and the child is not present. Start with something positive. Then describe your concerns from the child’s point of view: “She’s so full of energy, I think she needs more exercise,” not, “You shouldn’t be keeping her indoors all day.”

Remember, though, your child should be cared for according to your wishes. If you and your relative can’t agree, you may decide to find another arrangement.