

Selecting a Babysitter

It is preferable to personally interview several prospective sitters. Observe their interaction with your children. Look for mature and responsible people who listen and respond well to your children and appear relaxed and happy with them. Be specific about your expectations. Ask for a number of references (e.g., past employers, teachers, counselors, relatives, friends, neighbors.)

If you have not already done so, ensure that you have his or her name, address, and telephone number. If the sitter is not an adult, you should also meet his or her parents.

Once you have made a tentative selection, check all references carefully. Assure references that their comments will not be revealed to anyone, including the sitter. Ask them if they believe that the sitter possesses the demeanor, responsibility and qualifications to care for children. Ask if they would hire this person to care for their children. If anything said by a reference makes you feel uncomfortable, it may be best to select another person to care for your children.

Also, *Kieran's Law* now allows parents to request fingerprint background checks of in-house care givers who provide care for more than 15 hours per week. Parents should contact the DCJS Records Review Unit at (518) 485-7675 for forms and fee information.

When the Babysitter Arrives

Ask your babysitter to arrive at least fifteen minutes before your departure time. If the sitter has not been in your home before, conduct a brief tour of the house. Point out the location of telephones, first-aid equipment, doors and other possible exits.

Ensure that the sitter fully understands specific responsibilities and your general expectations. This includes knowing:

- ✓ That the children are not to be left alone at any time.
- ✓ Family rules, including disciplinary guidelines.
- ✓ Daily routines, including eating, television, and sleeping arrangements.

- ✓ About any food allergies that your children may have.
- ✓ Emergency telephone numbers: relatives, friends or neighbors and emergency services.
- ✓ How to contact you. Write down where you will be (address and telephone number) and your cellular telephone and/or pager numbers.
- ✓ That all outside doors should be kept locked and to never open the door for anyone (unless you have given prior permission.)
- ✓ That information should not be given to callers. Sitters should tell a caller that you are unavailable and should take a message.
- ✓ That children should be watched closely while awake, especially if taken outside, and should be checked regularly after they have gone to sleep.
- ✓ Who the children may play with or visit.
- ✓ Rules associated with use of your belongings (e.g., telephones, computers, appliances.)
- ✓ That friends should not be invited into your home.

Parents are also responsible for ensuring that children understand that the babysitter is in charge and that they are expected to follow all family rules.

When You Return Home

When you return home, you should always have a discussion with the babysitter. Ask about:

- ✓ Children's behavior and activity.
- ✓ Telephone calls.
- ✓ Anything out of the ordinary.

After the babysitter has left, talk to your children about what happened while you were gone. Ask them:

- ✓ If anything made them feel afraid or uncomfortable.
- ✓ If they would like him or her to babysit again.

The NYS Missing and Exploited Children Clearinghouse (MECC)

Services generally fall into three categories: support for law enforcement, assistance provided to left-behind family members and community outreach.

■ **The 1-800-FIND-KID hotline** operates 365 days a year, 24 hours a day. In addition to case intakes, missing child lead information received on this line is immediately disseminated to investigating police agencies.

■ **The statewide missing and unidentified person repository** is continually updated by MECC with information submitted by law enforcement agencies.

■ **Investigative assistance** provided to law enforcement agencies includes:

Flagging missing child birth and educational records.

Electronically distributing missing child posters via high speed broadcast fax/email systems. When a child is deemed to be "endangered", the *NYS AMBER Alert* and *DCJS Missing Child/College Student Alert* Programs are used to provide the most rapid and widespread public dissemination of information possible. Distribution includes police agencies, television and radio stations, NYS Thruway toll booths and service areas, border crossings, airports and bus terminals.

Placing missing child photographs and biographical information on the DCJS and NCMEC (National Center for Missing and Exploited Children) web sites.

■ **MECC collaboration** with the NCMEC, other state clearinghouses, other State agencies, non-profit organizations, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors and courts can provide nationwide assistance to police agencies and family members.

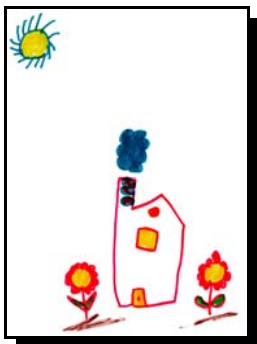
■ **MECC community outreach** includes: developing and distributing educational literature; making presentations at professional conferences; and offering the *Operation SAFE CHILD* ID Card Program at community events.

**NEW YORK STATE
MISSING &
EXPLOITED
CHILDREN
CLEARINGHOUSE**

Whether you work full time outside the home or are simply going out for the evening, you want the best possible care for your children while you are away from them.

Before you hire anyone to watch over your children, however, make sure that he or she is a mature, experienced and capable individual who truly cares about the welfare of children. Check all references, and make sure to observe the babysitter with your children. Above all, ask your children whether they like and trust the babysitter and what activities took place during your time away.

The New York State Missing and Exploited Children Clearinghouse has prepared these guidelines for parents in selecting a babysitter and preparing your home for temporary child care.



**IF YOU WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION,
CONTACT US AT:**

**NYS Division of Criminal Justice Services
4 Tower Place
Albany, NY 12203**

1-800-FIND-KID

**Missing child photographs and biographical
information and additional child safety information can
be viewed on our website.**

www.operationsafechild.org

Contributions made to the NYS MECC Fund made reproduction of this brochure possible. Contributions can be forwarded directly to the fund at the address listed above. Also, the NYS Tax Law now allows individuals to donate to the MECC Fund when filing state income tax returns. Every penny of your contribution goes directly to support the work of the Clearinghouse and local efforts statewide.

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March 2008

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IN CASE YOU NEED A BABYSITTER



**State of New York
David A. Paterson, Governor
Denise E. O'Donnell, Commissioner**