



# Guide to Finding the Right Nanny Placement Agency

Many families choose to use a full service nanny placement agency to find a quality in-home childcare provider. While finding an agency is not difficult, there are several hundred in the United States, finding one that will provide you with quality applicants and quality service can be tough. This fact sheet can help. The first section answers the most frequently asked questions about agencies as well as offers suggestions on what to look for and what to avoid. The second section provides a list of helpful questions to ask yourself when deciding which agency is the right one for your family.

## FAQ

**Q.** What is the best way to find an agency?

**A.** Personal referrals from friends, co-workers or caregivers are the best place to start. If you don't have a referral, you can find agencies through your local resource and referral agency, the yellow pages (under employment agencies or childcare), your local newspaper (in the help wanted section under domestic help or childcare), on the internet (keyword nannies), as well as the human resource department of your company. You will also find a detailed directory on our site, [AllAboutNannyCare.com](http://AllAboutNannyCare.com).

**Q.** It seems new agencies are popping up all the time. How do I know if an agency is a legitimate business?

**A.** First, make sure the agency is licensed and/or registered with the state they're headquartered in. You can verify their compliance with current regulations by contacting the state's Division of Consumer Affairs. Second, make certain they don't have any complaints filed against them with the Better Business Bureau. And finally, ask to see client references. Don't be put off if an agency offers written references rather than client contact information. Many nanny employers, even those thrilled with their placement agency, don't want to be personally contacted due to privacy or time constraints.

**Q.** What screening services can I expect from a placement agency?

**A.** Unfortunately, an agency is not required by law to do any screening. How much or how little it does depends upon the owner's business ethics and commitment to quality in-home childcare. Make sure you're comfortable with an agency's level of screening before you register with them. Every agency should take basic steps to ensure that the nannies they refer are quality caregivers who can consistently and effectively meet the diverse needs of children.

They should do...

- ◆ **an in-depth interview.** Asking childcare questions on an application is not enough. Assuming an experienced caregiver is a quality caregiver is not enough. An agency needs to ask tough questions about a nanny's motivation, childcare philosophy, belief system, education, background, and personality.
- ◆ **thorough reference checks.** In-depth conversations with references are crucial. 10 or 15 fill-in-the-blank questions will not provide real insight into what kind of person the nanny is, how well she relates to children, or how easily she fits into different working environments.
- ◆ **background checks.** While it doesn't happen often, it does happen – an applicant will have a criminal record or negative driving history. Every nanny should be subject to AT LEAST a social security verification, a county criminal check for all residences within the past year and a DMV check.

**Q.** How will I know if an agency *really* screens the way they say they do?

**A.** Don't assume anything. Ask what type of questions they ask in an interview and what qualities they look for in the nannies they work with. Then ask to speak to one or two *nanny* references to ensure they were screened as the agency described. It's also a good idea to ask for a sample nanny portfolio, the information compiled on a candidate that is provided to a family upon referral. It should include detailed interview and reference summaries as well as background check verifications.

**Q.** Do agencies screen the families they work with?

**A.** Yes, a quality agency will be just as picky about their families as they are about their nannies. In large part, an agency's ability to recruit quality caregivers depends upon the quality of jobs they offer. Great nannies will work with the agencies known for great jobs. So make sure the agency you choose has minimum standards for all jobs accepted and is interested in your employer style as well as your job requirements.

**Q.** Do agencies provide any follow-up services?

**A.** A quality agency will support you throughout your placement period. Depending upon the agency, that could include help with interviewing, salary and benefit negotiations, developing a nanny / family work agreement or mediation between you and your nanny if any problems arise. Every agency offers a different level of support so it is important to find one that matches your individual needs.

**Q.** How does the matching and placement process work?

**A.** After you choose an agency to work with, you will complete their application and submit it with the application fee. The agency will review the information and follow up with an in-depth interview. To make successful referrals, they need to know in detail the nanny's responsibilities, the type of person you're looking for, your child's personality, your household environment, your expectations, and your perspective on past caregiver relationships. They use this information to develop a profile of your position and match it to the profiles of the caregivers they have available. Each nanny that matches your profile will be presented to you along with her profile.

**Q.** How long does it take to find a nanny through an agency?

**A.** Although there is no way to predict how long it will take to find the right nanny for your family, a good rule of thumb is 3 to 6 weeks. By allowing yourself enough time, you won't feel pressured to make a choice that you're not fully comfortable with.

**Q.** How much does it cost to work with an agency?

**A.** Most agencies charge a nonrefundable application fee of \$75 to \$350. In addition, they charge a placement fee of \$1,800 to \$3,500 or 10% or 20% of the caregiver's annual salary.

**Q.** What kind of guarantee does an agency offer?

**A.** Each agency has their own refund / replacement policy. Most refund part of the placement fee or replace the caregiver during the first 30 or 60 days. Carefully consider the guarantee policy of an agency before you register with them. If you have a problem with an agency that only replaces a caregiver, you'll be forced to continue working with that agency and limited to the caregivers registered with them or forfeit your placement fee.

**Q.** What information should I be looking for when I talk to an agency for the first time?

**A.** Your initial conversation should give you a feel for the services they offer, their business ethics and track record. Remember, the agency wants you as a client so the picture they paint might not be the complete picture. Every question you ask has a "right" answer. Your job is to find out if what they say matches up with what they really do. Read between the lines. Engage the other person in a casual conversation and listen for clues about how they really run their business.

**Q.** Several agencies look similar on paper. How do I know which one is the right one for me?

**A.** You should look for an agency that provides quality services and that you connect with on a personal level. When talking to your top choices, ask yourself some questions and then follow your instincts. Do you trust this person? Do you feel this person really cares about making a good match or is she just concerned about making a placement? Do you feel she is simply telling you what you want to hear or is she being honest about how she can help you? A good relationship between you and your placement agency is a key ingredient in a good match.

## **Questions for Choosing a Placement Agency**

### **Are They a Legitimate Business?**

- ◆ Are they registered and/or licensed with the state?
- ◆ Do they have any complaints filed against them with the local Better Business Bureau?
- ◆ How long have they been in business?
- ◆ Do they provide references from former or current clients, both families and nannies?

### **The Basics**

- ◆ How long does it generally take to find a nanny through the agency?
- ◆ What is their placement rate?
- ◆ What is their success rate after 6 months? After one year?
- ◆ What is their registration fee?
- ◆ What is their placement fee?
- ◆ What is their refund policy?

### **How Do They Screen Their Nannies?**

- ◆ What are the minimum requirements for the nannies placed by the agency?
- ◆ What else do they look for when screening caregivers?
- ◆ What subjects do they discuss during a nanny interview (e.g. family background, childcare philosophy, education, personality)?
- ◆ Do they check all employment references or just childcare references?
- ◆ When checking references, how many years do they go back?
- ◆ Do they verify educational degrees?
- ◆ Do they verify letters of reference?
- ◆ Do they perform background checks before a nanny is referred or after a job is offered?
- ◆ What type of background checks are included in the placement fee?
- ◆ Will they provide a sample nanny portfolio?
- ◆ Is the information they provide in a candidate's portfolio detailed and comprehensive?

### **How Do They Screen Their Families?**

- ◆ What are the minimum standards for all jobs accepted (e.g. minimum salary, vacation, living quarters)?
- ◆ What else do they look for when screening families?
- ◆ What subjects do they discuss during a family interview (e.g. past nanny experiences, household environment, type of nanny / family relationship desired)?
- ◆ What do they expect from you as an employer?

## Quality of Service

- ◆ Do they follow-up with nannies and families after placement?
- ◆ Do they provide any professional development and/or additional training for the nannies they place?
- ◆ Do they provide a support system for the nannies they place?
- ◆ Do they have hours that fit your schedule?
- ◆ Can you communicate with them in ways that are convenient and time-saving for you (e.g. phone, email, text)?
- ◆ Will you be working with one placement counselor exclusively or will anyone in the office be able to help you if needed? If you'll be working with one person, is she available readily?
- ◆ Will they mediate any problems that arise in the nanny / family relationship?

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