

## A PARENTS' CHECKLIST FOR BABYSITTERS

- **AGE:** Age 12 should be the absolute minimum. Younger children do not have the emotional or physical maturity to deal with many of the problems that could arise. A good rule of thumb is, the younger the children being watched, the older the babysitter should be.
- **REFERENCES:** Sitters should provide references that indicate a proven track record for showing good common sense, maturity and following instructions. Keep a list of other qualified babysitters. In case your regular sitter is busy, you won't have to take 'just anyone' at the last minute.
- **FIRST AID:** Sitters should have first aid training and know the Heimlich maneuver for aiding choking victims. Knowledge of CPR techniques for infants and children is also important. Many RI community organizations such as [Women & Infants Hospital](http://Women & Infants Hospital) run periodic babysitter training classes. Check with the local Red Cross for these courses at [www.RIRedCross.org](http://www.RIRedCross.org).
- **NO SURPRISES:** There should be no surprises on either side. Before a sitter is left alone with the children, fees, house rules, discipline, etc. should be clearly discussed.
- **EMERGENCIES:** Sitters should always err on the side of caution. If a babysitter suspects a child in their care needs professional medical help, they should get it, even if it turns out later that it was an unwarranted precaution.
- **HOUSE RULES:** Make sure everyone understands the 'house rules' in terms of what is permissible, for both the sitter and the children. Examples include whether or not guests are allowed, telephone use, allowable snacks, etc.
- **CHECKLIST:**
  - Tell the sitter where you will be and how to reach you by land phone and by cell phone. Give the number of an alternate person, such as Grandma, in the event all else fails.
  - Give the name and number of a nearby friend or neighbor who can be called on quickly for assistance.
  - Make sure the sitter knows how to access emergency medical services such as the ambulance (dial 911) Also, put the number of the poison control center (1-800-222-1222) by the phone.
  - Give the sitter the shortest route to the nearest hospital emergency department in case he or she must drive there. If the sitter does not drive, make arrangements with a neighbor who could be contacted in the event of an emergency. Explain that they should use the hospital's 'Emergency Department' entrance and make sure they know where it is.
  - For children less than one year of age or for children with complex medical conditions we recommend only Hasbro Children's Hospital Emergency Room. For older children with minor medical emergencies, local hospital emergency rooms and walk-in urgent care centers are usually fine.
  - In order to be treated for anything less than a life-threatening condition, however, your babysitter will need your written consent and your health insurance card. This is probably necessary only if you'll be unreachable for any length of time. Explain the significance of the 'consent-to-treat' form (see [Consent Form for Parents](#)), sign it in the sitter's presence, and instruct him/her to take it to the emergency department if the need arises.
  - Leave the sitter a list of current health problems any of the children have and what medications or other treatments are prescribed. Also list any allergies to medications your child has.
  - If the sitter has to give medication, either measure it in advance or have him/ her practice measuring it until you're confident it can be done properly.