

How To Do A Solid Background Check

2007-04-27 03:30:49



One of the worst things I have ever seen was footage of a Washington nanny shaking a baby that would not stop crying. The shaking was very violent and frequent, and it is hard for me to believe that the child was not permanently damaged from the abuse. The parents had suspected that the nanny was being abusive to the baby and had set up cameras to see if their hunch was right. Unfortunately, it was. The nanny was fired of course and also criminally charged, but I couldn't help but wonder how many times that had happened and what effect it had on the child in the long term.

We all recognize the importance of protecting our children, but our society places an equal importance on the privacy of others. We are all too often reluctant to ask the questions that need to be asked when screening our child care providers because it makes us uncomfortable. You have to keep in mind, however, that you are screening the person who will be in charge of the most important part of your life, your children. Don't be squeamish when it comes to your search; there are a lot of people out there who are absolutely unsuitable for child care, and you need to make sure one of them doesn't end up looking after yours.

Your first line of defense, of course, will be personal references. Anyone applying for your childcare position should be willing and able to provide you with a lengthy list of references of past services, along with their numbers. Always call these numbers and find out how long the professional or service looked after their children and how they felt about the services provided. Your own personal acquaintances will be your best referral points; they can often recommend someone well suited to the task in front of you. Agencies will also provide references and recommendations, but remember that agencies are businesses and are sometimes dishonest.

Even if the caregiver is recommended through references and services and their references check out well, you should still undertake a background check of your own to make absolutely certain. You can either use a private agency to do the check or do it yourself. I would recommend private agencies simply because they know where to look and know exactly what they are doing. They also charge a fee, though, and if you want to skip the cost then you will need to do the check yourself.

When conducting the background check, there are a number of areas to look at for past incidents. Start with a criminal record check. Usually, anyone who intends to look after children has to have a criminal check done themselves, so if the person has already done so, so much the better. If not, all levels of government have lists of persons who have committed and these lists are available to the public and are usually easy to access.

Make sure to verify claims made on the potential caregiver's resume. There are tools available whereby you can verify an applicant's employment history as well as her education history. Also check with your local Worker's Compensation service to find out if the applicant is prone to making claims against employers.

You should also verify the applicant's social security number as well as doing a credit history report. Credit reports will let you know if the applicant is in trouble as far as debt goes; people in deep debt should always turn on the alarm bells in your head. Motor vehicle records can also be an important source in determining the character of the applicant; major infractions such as drinking and driving convictions or even charges mean you should pass the person by.