

Choosing a Responsible Caregiver



WHEN YOU LEAVE YOUR CHILD WITH YOUR BOYFRIEND/PARTNER OR BABYSITTER, you expect them to care for your child just like you would, **BUT, that is not always the case!** Every year, an overwhelming number of children are abused, neglected and even killed by temporary caregivers who are not related to them by blood. Most of the time, these are boyfriends of mothers of young children but other temporary caregivers, including friends of the parents who may be ill-equipped to care for these young children, are also guilty of committing these horrific crimes.

When young children are placed in the hands of non-relative caregivers, with little or no child care experience and a lack of parental bond with the child, the results can be dangerous. In fact, **children who live with adults not related to them** are nearly **50 times as likely to die** of inflicted injuries as children living with two biological parents. It's crucial for parents to designate a responsible adult or licensed child care facility to care for young children.

People who are under the influence of drugs or alcohol can get angry over minor things that all children do, like crying or spilling something. Some things to know and consider when deciding whether to leave your child in the care of a babysitter or caregiver are listed below but the only way to gauge this person's reaction to your child's behavior is to spend significant time observing them around your child.

Consider, does your partner/babysitter:

- Expect your child to do things that are unrealistic for his/her age?
- Does he/she show impatience or even anger when your child cries or has a tantrum?
- Overreact when your child breaks rules or refuses to follow directions?
- Call your child bad names?
- Think it's funny to scare your child?
- Say you are a bad parent and not strict enough with your child?
- Hurt your child? Blame you and say it's no big deal?
- Make all the decisions for you and your child?
- Tell you that your child is a nuisance?
- Drink alcohol or use drugs around your child?
- Handle guns and knives around your child?

If you answered "yes" to even one of these questions, your child may be at risk of injury. Never let a person you do not know very well have access to or babysit your children. Get to know the person before you let them move in with you...your child's LIFE depends on it!

What You Can Do

Besides knowing the answers to the questions above, take these additional steps to ensure you are choosing the a responsible caregiver.

Know if your partner/boyfriend has a criminal history.

1. Check the Florida Department of Corrections Offender Information Search at <http://www.dc.state.fl.us/appcommon/>
2. Check the Florida Sexual Offenders and Predators Database via direct link at: <http://offender.fdle.state.fl.us/offender/offenderSearchNav.do?link=advanced>

Also consider:

- How do they treat other women in the family and neighborhood?
- How do they treat other children in their family (nieces, nephews, friend's children)?
- If they have children, what is their relationship with them? Their mother?
- How have they treated former lovers, spouses and partners?

When you leave home:

- Be sure to leave your cell number or another emergency contact number
- Let your partner/boyfriend know that it's okay to call for help
- Check in often while you are away

When you return home:

- Ask your partner/babysitter what they did while you were away.
- If your child is old enough, ask how they liked being babysat by this person.
- Observe your child's appearance, condition and behavior. Do they seem peaceful and happy?

There are many other tips in this guide but if you need further assistance, please consult the resources below and in the back of this guidebook. Remember, your child's life depends on it.

For assistance in finding childcare: <http://www.floridaearlylearning.com/ccr.aspx>

For parenting programs in your county:

<http://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/child-welfare/whoswatching/parenting-class>

HERE'S HELP 

Use the **Family Resources on pages 95–99** to learn about a variety of family support services available in your community.