



Ten Tips:

Choose a Nanny Agency

Not all nanny referral agencies are created equal. Many reputable agencies have been serving clients for years, are active in professional and trade associations, and truly strive to make the best match for your family. Some are well meaning but simply inexperienced or lacking the resources (generally manpower) to effectively meet your needs. A small number are simply interested in the bottom line - move them in, move them out. The following suggested interview questions should be directed to the agency BEFORE you retain them.

1. HOW LONG HAS YOUR AGENCY BEEN IN BUSINESS?

While new is not de-facto bad, experience is a reasonable predictor of success.

Also evaluate the professional associations the agency aligns itself with. The International Nanny Association requires that all members adhere to its commitment to professional ethics. The Association of Premier Nanny Agencies goes further and all members' applications, contracts and practices are peer-reviewed for adherence to professional codes of conduct.

2. HOW MANY NANNIES DO YOU MATCH WITH FAMILIES IN A MONTH (YEAR)?

You want an agency that makes enough matches to be economically viable, but not a meat market. Three to six matches per employee per month is a minimum number. Also helpful, how many of the nannies and families are repeat clients?

3. WHAT IS YOUR SUCCESS RATE WITH PLACEMENTS?

Listen carefully for what you don't hear. No one is perfect, and it is unlikely that 'We have never had a failed placement' is true. Why do they think they are successful? Why do they think some placements haven't worked out?

Key: Look for an agency that carefully interviews the family and can restate your needs and expectations.

4. WHAT ARE YOUR FEES? WHAT IS YOUR REFUND POLICY?

Fees vary considerably across the country, and you should clearly understand the retainer and fee payment policies. 10 - 15% of the nanny's annual salary is an average range. New agencies typically have the lowest fees in the market, this is to offset for the perceived inexperience. Refund policies vary all over the place. Many agencies will pro-rate their fee on unsuccessful placements, others will

"I could do this myself but HomeWork Solutions is so easy to work with. Dealing with seniors every day, I know the assurance that required paperwork is completed accurately, reliably and on time for senior care is invaluable"

- Stacy C., Attorney, Washington D.C.

"Please renew my annual service. I did find a new nanny, Mary Poppins to be exact ;-), and I will be needing your services again. Thanks for a great service!"

- Janine M., Mother, Cary, NC

5. WHAT IS YOUR SCREENING PROCESS? DO YOU PROVIDE ME ANY DOCUMENTATION ON SCREENING?

A good agency will verify the employment history of prospective nannies, and generally contact (via telephone) some or all of the personal references provided. Skilled interviewers will try to determine the accuracy of the employment application, as well as the temperament and historical job performance of the candidate. Criminal and driving checks are generally not ordered until after you have extended a contingent offer of employment and it has been accepted by the nanny. Is the agency compliant with the Fair Credit Reporting Act? You should expect that the agency will share with you, in writing, the results of the prescreening, including the interviewer's impressions. You should also personally check the references of any candidate you genuinely feel you will make an offer to ... but don't exercise the people willing to give references if you aren't serious about the candidate.

Inquire about the specifics of the criminal background checks being done. This is VERY important, as the quality of this service varies tremendously among agencies. Be wary of responses such as *"We do nationwide criminal background investigations."* There is a very good [FAQ about Nanny Criminal Background Searches](#) that you should read to learn more about this subject.

6. QUALITY OF FAMILY INTERVIEW.

How well did the agency's placement professional listen to you? Were you asked the right questions to understand your family's needs? Do you believe the agency understands your needs well enough to match you with qualified applicants?

7. WHAT ARE THE AGENCY'S MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR APPLICANTS?

Look at the minimum standards for education, experience, and prior employment references. The most successful agencies can be very choosy!

8. DO YOU HAVE TRAINING OR SUPPORT PROGRAMS FOR YOUR NANNIES?

Look for the agency that will organize quarterly Red Cross CPR training, arrange an annual picnic for the nannies, or provide the newly placed nanny with a list of names and phone numbers of other nannies in their area. Look for the agency that provides the nanny with written material to help her adjust to her job ... job description, a daily log format, child development milestones, toilet training tips, and things of that nature. These activities not only help you and your nanny, they also show the commitment of the agency to the nanny, a commitment that will translate into experienced nannies who will return to that agency for their next job.

9. HOW DO YOU RECRUIT YOUR NANNIES?

Standard responses can be online social media recruitment, job fairs, college career centers, newspaper advertisement, nannies that they placed in the past and word of mouth referrals from those nannies. These more experienced and well operated agencies often have more experienced candidates in their pool.

10. WHAT TYPE OF AFTER-PLACEMENT PROGRAMS AND SUPPORT DO YOU HAVE?

Successful agencies go out of their way to insure that you and the nanny have the tools you need to enjoy a long term, successful placement. Most will work with the family to draft a work agreement that stipulates all the terms of employment for the nanny and will require that this agreement be formalized before the nanny actually starts work. The agency should touch base with both you and the nanny at the end of the first week and first month to gauge the satisfaction with the match. Often the agency will elicit feedback from the nanny that she is afraid to tell you directly. This 'go-between' role is critical to the long term success of the placement.

The agency should also provide you with business referrals for services you will need after the nanny is hired. These include [nanny payroll and tax services](#), nanny health insurance, and workers' compensation insurance providers.

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