

Before returning to work find quality child care

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You only have a few baby pounds left to shed, you just mastered breast-feeding, and you and your new little one are just beginning to understand each other. But, as soon as that has happened, it's now almost time to return to work.

The thought of finding a child provider to care for your baby the way you do stresses out many moms returning to work. Some second guess their initial decisions. But there's comfort in knowing you're not alone. Mothers across Atlanta are still deciding on the right care for their children.



"Busy moms have a lot in common with circus performers," according to Candi Wingate, owner of Nannies4hire.com . "We have to juggle many balls in the air and we worry that it's all going to come crashing down at any moment. Add some crying babies, toddlers melting down and kids needing help with homework or rides to soccer practice and your life often feels like a three-ring circus."

So Wingate recommends considering a nanny once it's time to go back to work. Wingate says that a nanny is a great choice for parents who want to rely on someone for help with shuttling the kids to school, doing housework, preparing meals and running errands. Another plus with choosing a nanny is that when children are sick, parents do not have to worry about taking time off of work.

She says give yourself time to conduct your search. Settling for someone you're not sure about leaves you uneasy about your child's care in your absence. "Do your homework," Wingate says. "Asking for references, do interviews, check their backgrounds and observe the nanny interacting with your child."

If you're interested in a day care center, Jacki Gass, president of Sunbrook Academy, says that "word of mouth is crucial. But if you are not able to get the opinions of other mothers' experiences, then a day care center should be able to give you references."

Make sure that the center is licensed as that ensures there are certain standards they must meet and that the center is accountable to someone. And, if possible look for centers with accreditation. But while checking for licensing and accreditation is equally important, Gass says that you also have to have a good feeling when you walk in the place. Is it clean and well-organized? Do they have a balanced schedule of active and less active times? Is the staff interacting with the children when they are upset? Is there an age-appropriate curriculum?

"Stay active with the school and don't just come in and out," Gass says. "See what's going on and communicate with the staff and center director. You want to see that the children are begin engaged."

Affordable child care options:

The ailing economy has touched nearly everyone's wallets and many families are looking for less expensive options in child care. As such, Wingate says that there are several ways a nanny can save a family money. For example, more families are turning to "nanny share," where two families share one nanny and split the cost. Also, a nanny can do housework and even tutor for your child, saving money on both cleaning services and tutoring classes.

Gass says that the majority of people are indeed looking for more economical child care options. But she cautions that while that's understandable, it's important to make sure they are not trading price for the quality of care.