



# The perfect fit

## Unique child-care arrangements that allow for more flexibility

BY KRISTEN J. DUCA

**I**t is not out of the question to ask a potential child-care candidate if she would be willing to share a full-time schedule with your family and your friend or neighbor's family.

This arrangement can work as long as each family gives the caregiver set days and hours.

More and more, people with children are working flexible schedules in order to strive for a desirable work-life-family balance. With work schedules that allow for flexible hours, parents may neither need nor want a caregiver on a full-time basis.

However, many caregivers still desire a full-time schedule along with the appropriate compensation to match.

In an attempt to satisfy the caregiver's needs, some parents decide to hire the caregiver on a full-time basis even though they do not necessarily need a caregiver for so many hours.

The parents use the additional hours that the caregiver is in their home looking after their child while they are not at work to run errands, exercise, prepare meals, engage in housekeeping, meet up with friends, shop for household goods, and so on.

Here are a few ways parents are making

child-care schedules work for them and the caregivers:

### **Caregiver shares**

If your budget allows you the luxury of employing a caregiver for additional time to give you a chance to take care of personal errands, relations, or issues — then by all means, do it.

If you do not have the financial means to employ a caregiver for extra hours or if you want to spend the time when you are not at work alone with your child, then consider a caregiver-share arrangement.

If you have a friend or neighbor who desires a similar child care situation, you can jointly evaluate whether both families' hours provide the caregiver with enough hours and income to satisfy her needs. Obviously, you will have a problem if the hours both you and your friend

desire overlap.

If you do not have a friend who also desires a caregiver share, then you may need to do a little bit of researching and networking to find someone you could work with in a caregiver-share situation. Have an idea of what hours and days you need the caregiver to work for your family before you start your search.

### Rotating caregiver arrangements

Some families desire "rotating caregiver" arrangements that enable them to employ more than one caregiver for their children.

These families do not like the idea of hiring one caregiver exclusively for the entire week. They do not want the caregiver to get bored or overtired.

As a result, they hire a few caregivers who desire part-time or flexible work schedules with the hopes that each caregiver will show up to work fresh and energized.

Additionally, they believe that their child may learn more by getting various perspectives and experiencing different activities.

It is important to make sure the caregiver candidate is receptive to a rotating-caregiver situation. While some caregiv-

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ers welcome a flexible work schedule, others prefer a more traditional work-week.

You do not want the caregiver to feel like you do not think she is capable of taking care of your child on a full-time basis. You may need to explain to her your philosophy on rotating-caregiver arrangements.

Moreover, you do not want to get into a situation where the caregiver feels jealousy or resentment toward you, your fam-

ily, the other caregivers, or your child.

### Caregiver organization

Additionally, if you employ multiple caregivers, then remember that organization is of the utmost importance. You will want to clearly communicate the exact hours and days each caregiver will work each week.

Whether you create a master calendar or a detailed spreadsheet of hours that you need coverage, make sure the caregivers know exactly when they will take care of your child. This will prevent any mistakes, such as both caregivers showing up for work at the same time.

Also, take into consideration the vacation days and holidays that affect your caregivers as well as your family.

If you work together as a team, the arrangement should be positive and beneficial to all involved.

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