Sharing Care

What is share care?
Share care is a non-traditional child care arrangement in which two families share the services of one in-home provider. In-home caregivers are not required to be licensed, as long as care takes place in one of the families’ homes, not the caregiver’s.

What are the benefits?
- **Family support network:** Share care offers an opportunity to connect with other parents for advice and support. Also, when the caregiver is sick, parents can alternate in taking time off to provide care.
- **Children’s socialization:** Share care is an alternative to family child care homes and child care centers (which often have long wait lists) that allows children to form bonds with one another and with their caregiver.
- **Cost:** By sharing a nanny’s salary with another family, each family benefits from the low adult to child ratio at a much lower cost than a personal nanny.

Preliminary Considerations
- **Schedule:** Share care works best when the families’ schedules are similar or complementary.
- **Salary:** When interviewing prospective share families and caregivers, be forthright about your budget. Remember that a fair wage is necessary to secure a quality caregiver. Also, expect to pay a caregiver a higher salary when caring for multiple children. Offering a slightly higher wage, benefits, and the potential for wage increases may help you find a committed caregiver.
- **Taxes:** You are responsible for paying taxes for your employee. In your budget, remember to include the amount to pay and withhold for Social Security, State Disability Insurance, State Unemployment Insurance, and Worker’s Compensation (if applicable). Contact the IRS for information regarding necessary forms, withholding amounts and payment guidelines. Your final budget should include taxes, insurance, and the cost of food and supplies.
- **Unexpected Costs:** You may also choose to contribute to a fund for unexpected costs such as a backup caregiver, unexpected repairs, or a birthday/holiday gift for your provider. Monthly contributions to this fund can help avoid unexpected financial strains.
- **Age Range:** Consider your child’s need for attention and socialization when determining the age range of the other children in care. Also consider the needs and abilities of your caregiver when deciding this aspect of your arrangement. Some caregivers prefer to look after children who are close in age. Others may prefer caring for one infant and one preschool-age child.
- **Location of Care:** Determine the child care location based on the needs of both families. How far apart are your homes? Who is able to travel? Whose home can best accommodate multiple children? Is it possible to rotate location?
• **Beliefs, Values, and Philosophy:** Other parents’ ideas about child rearing and child care may differ from yours. When seeking a compatible share care family, it is important to discuss issues such as discipline, meals, napping, and health/safety. Please do not expect a provider to incorporate two differing sets of values into one child care setting. To avoid issues, discuss the caregiver’s values and beliefs during the interview process.

**Making Connections**
Once you’ve determined your family’s needs and desires you can begin to look for a suitable match with another family and caregiver. *Please note that the following resources are referrals, not recommendations.*

- **Post a message** at parent’s group websites, such as Golden Gate Mother’s Group: [www.ggmg.org/](http://www.ggmg.org/), Bernal Heights Parents Group: [groups.yahoo.com/group/bernalheightsparents/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/bernalheightsparents/), or find a family with similar needs at sites such as [http://www.wunderhood.com](http://www.wunderhood.com) or [http://nannyshare.us/](http://nannyshare.us/)
- **Find a nanny** at a website such as [www.parentsplaceonline.org](http://www.parentsplaceonline.org), [www.urbansitter.com](http://www.urbansitter.com), [www.care.com](http://www.care.com), or [www.sittercity.com](http://www.sittercity.com)
- **Classified ads** in local newspapers and parent publications such as Parents’ Press, Bay Area Parent, and Peninsula Parent
- **Bulletin boards** at children’s retail stores, hospitals, grocery stores, laundromats, libraries, churches, and parenting resource centers
- **Childbirth/parenting classes** are a great way to meet other parents with similar needs.
- **Your local resource and referral agency**, which may offer advertising or matching services.
- **Local events and playgroups** to connect with parents can be found on websites such as [www.meetup.com](http://www.meetup.com), [www.raisingthem.com/](http://www.raisingthem.com/), [www.ggmg.org/](http://www.ggmg.org/), [www.sfkids.org](http://www.sfkids.org)
- **Word-of-mouth** is powerful tool among neighbors and co-workers!

**TrustLine Background Check**
In addition to calling references, parents are encouraged to check a potential caregiver’s TrustLine registration status or request an application for TrustLine registration by calling 1-800-822-8490. TrustLine is a database of in-home child care providers that have cleared a background screening through the California Department of Justice, the FBI, and the Child Abuse Index. For more information, visit [www.trustline.org](http://www.trustline.org).

**Communication**
Open communication is essential for an effective partnership among families and caregivers. Parents must keep each other and the caregiver informed of their expectations and feelings. The caregiver also must keep parents informed of day-to-day occurrences, discipline issues, or his/her feelings regarding the arrangement.

- **Hold regular meetings** during which parents can discuss the share arrangement away from the caregiver. It is not appropriate to make decisions during pick-up and drop-off; meeting on an evening or weekend will provide a relaxed setting for discussing contractual issues, budgets, revising policies, and reviewing the overall success of the arrangement.
- **Use daily notes** to leave the caregiver messages or instructions. Similarly, the caregiver can make notes about the child’s day, with information about naps, meals, diapers, and activities.
- **Evaluate your caregiver** on a regular basis. The logical time for a first review is at the end of the probationary period. Subsequent performance reviews should be arranged at regular intervals. The provider’s review is an opportunity for exchange and dialogue between parents and caregiver. Never criticize your caregiver in front of the children as it will immediately compromise his/her authority.
- **Supply an emergency information card** for each child in care that includes:
  - Name, address, and cell/work phone numbers of each parent
  - Name and number of the person(s) to contact when the parent(s) cannot be reached
Contractual Issues
After you’ve found a family to share with and a caregiver that you wish to hire, it is crucial to enter into a written agreement. Address the following issues:

- **Commitment:** How long is the family/caregiver expected to commit to employment?
- **Job Description:** What duties are expected of the caregiver? What method of discipline has been agreed upon? Is there a daily schedule for napping, meals, etc.? Is the provider expected to perform additional household duties? It is important to be very specific about expectations and things you find undesirable or unacceptable.
- **Salary:** How much will the caregiver be paid? Will s/he be paid hourly or by salary? How often will payments be made? Will payment be in cash or by check? Will the caregiver be paid when s/he is sick?
- **Benefits:** Does the caregiver receive benefits such as health insurance, transportation reimbursement, or paid sick/vacation days in addition to his/her salary? (Other “perks” might include permission to use a family’s car or washer/dryer during working hours.)
- **Vacation:** Is the caregiver paid during periods of time when the families are on vacation? Is the caregiver offered paid vacation time? Will the caregiver be paid for legal holidays when the parents do not have to work?
- **Health Considerations:** When will the child(ren) be considered too ill to be in a group care setting? Will parents pay for time not used when their child is ill? When the caregiver is ill, will a substitute caregiver be hired, or will the parents rotate taking responsibility for care? Will the caregiver be paid for some or all of the days s/he is ill?
- **Maintenance & Supplies:** Who is responsible for cleaning up at the end of the day: the parents, children, or caregiver? If only one home is being used for care, who pays the cost of depleted or broken household items? Remember that the cost of toilet paper, tissue, and hand soap adds up over time! Will parents bring food, diapers, and toys for their child(ren), or will money be pooled for these items?
- **Probationary Period:** How long is the trial period during which, for any reason, the families or caregiver may choose to leave the arrangement? Will the caregiver receive additional wages after successful completion of this trial period?
- **Termination:** Under what conditions might the caregiver be terminated? Under what circumstances can the partnership between parents be terminated? Under what conditions may the caregiver leave the arrangement? Would s/he lose salary for early termination of the contract? How much advance notice must be given to terminate the arrangement?

Have fun and be creative with this type of child care arrangement, but remember to take your time when choosing a caregiver and family. This arrangement can be a great money-saving way for your child to get individualized care, but only if your needs closely match those of the other parties involved. As with all other types of child care, it is also important to ensure that your caregiver is safe and competent. Background checks to consider include Trustline, DMV and credit check, and/or speaking to references.

Sources:
- [www.babycenter.com](http://www.babycenter.com)
- [www.nannynetwork.com](http://www.nannynetwork.com)
- [www.trustline.org](http://www.trustline.org)