

LEAVING

If you have a child in daycare, you're probably very careful to pick her up on time. But have you ever considered what might happen if an emergency prevented you from being there?

BABY

STRANDED

By Brette McWhorter Sember

 When you begin taking your baby to a daycare center, you will usually be asked to fill out a form, listing people who are authorized to pick up your child at any time. Sherry Workman, executive director of the National Association of Child Care Professionals, says, "Each state has its own regulations about those who have permission to pick up the child from the center. Generally, names, phone numbers and sometimes driver's license numbers are required on the form." Workman points out that a parent should try to notify the center in writing, in advance, if the parent is planning to have an authorized person pick up the baby.

Even though you pre-authorize people to pick up your baby, they may still need to meet an additional requirement. Susan Perry-Manning, outreach and implementation manager for Child Care Aware, explains that most programs require people who are pre-authorized to pick up a child "to show a valid state-issued ID before the child will be released

to them." Make sure you explain this policy to the people who will be picking up your baby so they won't be shocked or insulted and will have ID ready.

While it's important to provide written notice to the center (when possible) that someone else will be picking up your child, Workman says, "Sometimes an oral directive is sufficient with some type of identification to confirm that it is the parent. Email may provide this directive. If possible, parents should notify the center in writing any time there is a change in the normal routine."

Workman and Perry-Manning agree that it is important to understand your center's policy for having other people pick up your child. Plan it out in advance. You don't want the center to refuse to release the baby to the person you've authorized because of a mix up or failure to notify them.

"If the program does not have written policies in place, request that they create them," Perry-Manning suggests. In most cases, centers try to be flexible and understanding in emergencies. Sandra Ray of



Midland, TX remembers, "Once I had a car accident on my way to daycare. I called from a cell phone to let the daycare know that I was fine but would be running late. I then contacted a family member who was not on my list but who could pick up the children before the daycare closed. I called the daycare back to let them know who was coming to get the children. They asked for ID but understood the circumstances."

Long List!

Whether you leave your child at a daycare center or with a private caregiver, such as a sitter, it's a good idea to authorize several people as alternates for pick-up.

"You should have three to four people listed as pick-ups," Sharon Wren of East

Moline, IL points out. "At least one should be a friend or from another part of the family."

If there is someone you specifically do not want to grant permission to pick up your child, such as a parent without custody, make sure you notify the daycare provider in writing. It is also a good idea to provide a copy of any supporting court documents.

Planning for Emergencies

While it's important to provide prior authorization for family or friends to pick up your baby from daycare while you are away, it's important to also have those names and numbers on file with the center in case you are unexpectedly detained and can't reach the center.

"If the parent does not pick up the child at an appropriate time, the staff will begin calling all the numbers that are available to them," Workman explains. "If they are unable to make a contact, they may call protective services. The more contact numbers, the better."

With a little planning, you can smoothly transition to having someone else pick up your baby from daycare while you are away or if you have an emergency. Perry-Manning says, "Communication is key. Parents, the childcare program and emergency contact individuals should know what plans will be followed in the event the parent is not able to pick up his or her child." 📞

About the author: Brette McWhorter Sember is a mother of two, a former attorney and the author of twelve books.

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