

The Use of Helpers in Licensed Family Child Care Homes

According to our Rules:

“Helper” means a person at least 13 years of age and less than 18 years of age who assists the provider with the care of children.

There has been confusion about who is considered to be a “helper.” If a provider identifies or utilizes a person as a “helper,” they must meet this definition. The Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) has clarified that children who are younger than 13 years CANNOT be used as a helper.

Frequently providers ask their own school age children to help them in various ways. Many children who are 11 and 12 years participate in babysitting classes. It is reasonable to involve these children to a degree, but it is critical to realize that this is a business and not the typical family situation. The rules can and need to be different in your child care home. Regardless of best intentions, if a child is injured due to the actions of another child who “was helping,” the licensed provider is liable, and could face negative licensing actions.

To help establish some practicable guidelines for licensed providers, Anoka County Child Care Licensing has developed the following list of tasks that are strictly for the caregiver to perform. There is also a list of suggested appropriate ways to involve children less than 13 years.

Caregiver Only Tasks:

- Any lifting or carrying of a day care child, even a sibling, which includes picking them up out of a crib or high chair, etc.
- Diapering and/or assisting with toileting
- Bottle feeding or feeding an infant
- Buckling into car seats/boosters

Acceptable Tasks for Children: (taking each child’s developmental abilities into consideration)

- Playing with or reading to other children
- Helping preschool children dress in outerwear (snowsuits, boots, etc.)
- Doing errands (e.g.; get a clean diaper, Kleenex, bottle, etc.)
- Pushing a stroller while being supervised directly by a caregiver
- Holding babies (Parents should be consulted and consent to having any child, including a sibling, hold their baby)

There are times when providers have also used children to be “an extra set of eyes” when they need to leave a room or go inside briefly. Please remember that a child less than 13 years cannot serve as a replacement to meet the supervision requirements. A provider must still be within sight or hearing and capable of intervening.

Helping hands can be wonderful, but children’s safety and your liability must be foremost in your mind. Offering children opportunities to learn responsibility can be helpful to both the provider and child. If you have any questions, please contact your licensing worker.