

# Child Care Alternatives

As working parents, we have all faced an unexpected school closing, weather delays, or a sick child that have left us scrambling to find child care in a pinch. When these unexpected events pop up, it is nice to have a plan. Here are a couple of alternative solutions that can offer safe options for your children and peace of mind for you.

**Flexible work hours.** Not everyone will have this option as a working parent, and even though it may not be a part of your current company policy, it never hurts to ask. Employers want good, dependable employees, even if they have to work outside of “normal” operating ours. Asking your boss to allow you to start your shift later may be an option. Another way to be flexible can be organizing your work hours opposite your partner’s schedule so at least one caregiver can be attending to your children’s needs while the other is working. For instance, one parent or caregiver could work one day while the other takes the following day. You may even be able to alternate morning and evening shifts depending on the work you do.

**Babysitters.** Family members, such as parents or siblings, can be a great resource when looking for child care in a pinch. However, family may not always be an option requiring a babysitter from within your community. College students home on break, or even high school students looking for ways to make some spending money are a great resource to consider. If you do not know any personally, ask friends and family for recommendations. Another resource to consider may be young people in your church community or day care teachers who have kept your child previously. Employing young people in our communities is also a great way to strengthen and build healthy supports for you and your children.

**Older siblings.** Allowing older siblings to watch younger children may be an option. Maturity is a big factor when considering whether your child is old enough to care for a younger sibling. A 12- or 13-year-old child may be responsible enough to watch a child 5 or older. Provided no emergency situations arise, this may be an option for short periods of time (3 to 5 hours).

**Child swap.** A “free” alternative is to create a child care cooperative in which two or more families agree to rotate child care. This option requires one caregiver to provide child care for all of the children while the other parent(s) go to work. The next day or week, the caregiver who worked will be the one to provide child care allowing the other parent(s) to go to work.

It is hard to plan for the unexpected, and certain circumstances may prevent some of these alternative solutions from being an option for you. However, these ideas might help provide options in lurch.

## Source:

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## Social media post:

Finding child care when school is out can be a challenge. We have some creative ideas for keeping kids at home if you can’t take time off from work.