

CHOOSING A HOUSESHARE FAMILY

Treat choosing a houseshare family with as much care as you would choosing a partner. Your children, as well as yourself, will be spending a lot of time with those you choose, so you make sure you ask as many questions as necessary to ensure compatibility.

Below are some guidelines to help make the process successful.

What are you looking for?

- Someone who shares common interests and expectations in terms of cleaning, paying for things, food, using each other's things etc.
- Someone who shares similar sleep and social habits.
- Someone with similar childrearing and discipline habits.
- Do you want a male or female, smoker or non-smoker, pets, someone older or younger or similar age, with similar aged children?
- Someone who you feel you are easily able to have open discussions with.

Initial Contact

- You may want to set up a separate email address for contacting potential houseshare families - you can set up free email addresses at www.hotmail.com and www.yahoo.com.au.
- Have a think about your initial criteria and most important questions you want to ask. Also think about what you consider annoying habits and undesirable qualities.
- Arranging an initial meeting on safe, neutral ground such as a park or coffee shop may be a good idea. You could even both organise to take a friend or family member along for a second opinion. Decide whether or not to take your children with you on the first meeting.

What to discuss?

- What are their hobbies and interests. Do they like to spend a lot of time at home or do they go out a lot.
- What is their main motivation for housesharing - e.g. financial, company, emotional support, security. Have they shared a house before? Are their children used to spending time with other children?

- Ask them what their worst habits are and their pet hates.
- Do they have family in the area, and if so, will they be visiting often.
- What is the situation with the non custodial parent. Are they in contact, do they have a volatile relationship, is there a shared custody arrangement.
- Who will look for the property - will you look together or will one person be responsible for putting together a shortlist?
- How much notice would they need to give before moving in?
- Do you both have a deposit ready to pay on a rental property?
- What are you both looking for in terms of price, location and facilities? An apartment or a house? How many bedrooms? Are you willing for your children to share a room?
- What facilities are important to you - parking, 24hr security, internal laundry, garden, length of lease, proximity to public transport?
- What is your guest policy and who gets a key to your property? How do you handle cleaning responsibilities? Who does the grocery shopping? What are your policies for communal areas? How do you handle paying rent and bills?
- Once you have decided to houseshare, you should each make a list of the furniture and appliances that you will be able to provide. Decide how you will acquire any items that you do not have - will they be joint purchases or will some be individual? Are there some duplicated items that you will sell? Or place into storage?
- Who will be responsible for dealing with the landlord and tradesmen regarding any property problems?
- Ask whether the other person is willing to give you contact details of work, family or previous landlord or flatmate references. Arrange to meet at each other's current properties - this will give you a lot of insight into the other person. You could even try spending the weekend together to see how you get on.
- Have a read of the Sample Houseshare Agreement in the Premium Members area for tips on more detailed considerations.