

The Right Candidate for the Home

HELPFUL HINTS FROM A STAFFING AGENCY

The home is a sanctuary for those who live therein, and so the care that goes into choosing who has access is of paramount importance. An employer who can really define his or her needs is well on the way to a successful hire. Additionally, an employee who knows his or her limitations is better able not to be a “bad hire.” Employer or employee, whether you’re using an agency or working independently, here is some advice to aid you in your search.

FOR THE EMPLOYER: THE JOB DESCRIPTION

The importance of a proper job description and work agreement cannot be emphasized enough. A detailed job description prepared by the homeowner will save time, eliminate error, and aid in finding the appropriate domestic employee. The applicant’s skills are matched with the client’s needs, so the more that is known about those needs, the better the chance of success the first time. An applicant should be able to determine a daily routine based on the job description. The job description should include a work schedule with flexibility where needed, and should detail any additional responsibilities, such as child or pet care. If there is a uniform requirement, that information should first appear on the agreement. Some agencies also do in-home

evaluations and can assist in preparing the job description.

FOR THE CANDIDATE: THE INTERVIEW

Dress appropriately when interviewing for a professional domestic position. Being overdressed is better than being inappropriately dressed. Remember that the client wants to know what you can do for him or her. A short, informative résumé is preferable; one or two pages should do. Your questions should be centered around the best way you can serve the client. If you’re going to take notes, get the permission of your future employer first. Always address the client by his or her surname unless asked to do otherwise. It is always advised to arrive for your interview a few minutes early, not a half-hour early or late. And always look refreshed.

FOR THE EMPLOYER: DEFINE BEFORE THEY SIGN

All domestic employees should have a work agreement. It will include the employee’s start date with salary, the pay periods, and work schedule, including lunch and break times. Also include specific benefits—vacation days, sick days, and salary reevaluation. This agreement is also a good place for the confidentiality clause. The domestic employee will sign this agreement with the understanding that he or she can perform all the



duties in the job description and is in accord with all the conditions. Since domestic positions are so diversified, many agencies will assist the clients by preparing a personal work agreement for them.

ON THE JOB: PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE

It is essential that most domestic household staff be knowledgeable in the proper care of the home. Manufacturers usually will provide the information necessary for each specific product, such as marble, special glass, wood, or stone. But as a domestic employee, you should familiarize yourself with the proper care of brass, copper, silver, and other metals used throughout the home. And it doesn’t hurt

to have working knowledge of simple electronics. Ongoing education helps you remain the best at what you do.

FINAL WORDS TO THE CANDIDATE

Always anticipate your employer’s needs. Be polite, smile, and make eye contact when speaking with your employer. Know your boundaries and use discretion. Practice appropriate etiquette. Preparing a work journal is a helpful must. Always add a personal touch, and do not be a clock-watcher. ☺

Responding to the need for professional, qualified domestic personnel, Carol Hasher established Camelview Domestic Placement Service in 1984.