Childcare and Social Distancing

Many parents have inquired about how to seek childcare while respecting the principles of social distancing. Parents who must consider sitters from outside the home requested guidance on options that are considered safer given the pandemic and the stay-at-home orders issued by Illinois’ and Indiana’s governors.

To date, reputable sources of information, such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Illinois Department of Public Health, and outstanding medical centers such as ours do not offer such advice. Absent direct guidance from reliable institutions such as those and extrapolating from the principles those reputable sources espouse, the University of Chicago offers the following information to parents:

1. Some parents who live near a family (or a couple of families) they know and trust are arranging babysitting cooperatives within their trusted circle. Such arrangements allow parents to take turns watching all the children while the other parents have time for work or necessary tasks that are more difficult to accomplish when children are present.

2. Other parents are choosing one babysitter whom they trust and making an explicit agreement about exclusivity, self-isolating as if they were a single household.

3. While parents are free to use any sitter service or babysitter they know, given that individuals over the age of 60 and/or with certain underlying health conditions, such as asthma, diabetes, and heart conditions, engaging senior citizens or most grandparents to babysit is not recommended.

4. The Hyde Park Neighborhood Club (HPNC) childcare referral service has a one-time fee of $25. The fee allows you to ask for assistance for up to a year. You can pay the fee by credit card over the phone to HPNC front desk personnel: 773-643-4062.

5. Perspectives, the Employee Assistance Program, offers a no-charge referral service by phone at 1.800.456.6327 or online using the ID and password at Perspectives Ltd.

6. For children who are old enough, parents on the tenure-track may consider the virtual babysitting option that the University has established with University students who are in good standing with their academic unit and have passed a background check conducted by the Youth Program Coordinator in the Office of Risk Management.
   https://forms.gle/jSUzNPRtjhYSWy3j6

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