

# Protecting Yourself From False Accusations

By Tom Copeland

How can providers protect themselves in these situations?

\* A parent threatens to turn a provider into child protection (claiming she abused her child), unless the provider drops her demand to be paid for a two-week notice.

\* A parent calls a provider's licensing worker to complain that her provider left her child alone while the provider went shopping.

There is no way a provider can prevent a parent from making a false complaint to child protection or licensing. Here are some steps that all providers can take to help reduce the consequences of such complaints:

1) Purchase business liability insurance that covers accusations of child abuse against you and all members of your family as well as any employees you may have. Once you are accused of child abuse you should immediately contact your liability insurance agent and ask for guidance.

2) Keep in close communication with your licensing worker about any potential problems with parents. Licensing workers say that if they know there is a conflict between the parent and the provider about payments before the parent calls and makes a child abuse allegation, they are much less likely to take what the parent says seriously. This can make a big difference when it's one person's word against another.

Therefore, you should call your licensor to report parent problems as they occur. The purpose of these calls to your licensor is not to ask for help in resolving the conflict, but rather to go on record as saying that a conflict exists. This will help support your position later that the parent is making up the accusation to avoid paying what he or she owes you. Some of the best times to call your licensor are when you are about to terminate a parent, when a parent terminates care, when you are about to send a letter to a parent demanding payment, and when the parent threatens you with making a complaint.

3) Keep careful chronological notes of the conflict you are having with parents. Write down what the parent says to you if they are complaining about your care. You want to be able to remember exactly what the parent said so that it can be compared to what they tell licensing.

4) Lastly, require parents to pay you at least a week in advance and pay you for their last two weeks of care in advance. If you follow these rules, a parent will never

leave owing you money. Therefore, you won't have to threaten parents with a lawsuit to collect what they owe you, and parents will be less likely to make false accusations to avoid paying.

None of these steps will guarantee that you won't be faced with a child abuse investigation. Unfortunately, providers are vulnerable to vindictive parents. If you have experienced such false complaints and came out of it without penalty, you may want to consider talking to your local media about your story. The more the public understands that false accusations do occur the more likely it is that the next falsely-accused provider will get better treatment.

Tom Copeland - [www.tomcopelandblog.com](http://www.tomcopelandblog.com)