

## Here's how to protect yourself, your family and the people you rely on to work in your home

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Many families rely on nannies, housekeepers, and home health aids to keep their busy lives and households running smoothly. In most cases, this kind of employment is good for both parties. But there are also far too many cases of domestic workers being trapped in miserable, inhumane situations by employers who violate their rights. U.S. law applies to these workers and failure to comply with local and federal law may lead to the prosecution of an employer for human trafficking. That's true regardless of whether the nanny, housekeeper or other domestic worker is a relative, or whether their lives would have been equally or more difficult in their home countries. Here's what you should do - and not do - to ensure you are treating those who live and work in your home with the respect they deserve as human beings and are entitled to under U.S. law.

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### DO

- ✓ Draw up a contract before employment starts. Be sure that contract specifies wages and working conditions including hours to be worked. This protects both you and the worker.
- ✓ Renegotiate or add to the contract if you have additional needs.
- ✓ Include days off and be explicit about daily working and leisure hours for full-time or live-in domestic workers in their contracts. Do this even if such detailed contracts are not typical in the country where either you or the domestic worker comes from.
- ✓ Arrange for an interpreter for them to set up and manage their own accounts if language barriers make this otherwise difficult or impossible for them to do on their own.
- ✓ Help your domestic worker find support systems in the community, particularly if he or she is from another country. This could mean helping them find and use community centers and libraries on their days off, attend church services, take classes or meet with other domestic workers.
- ✓ Consult your local labor and trafficking laws. Labor laws protect workers regardless of their country of origin.

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### DON'T

- ✗ Don't ask your domestic worker to take on hours or responsibilities outside of the contractual obligations - such as asking your nanny to clean your home - if that is not part of your original understanding. If you require some degree of flexibility, write that into the contract.
- ✗ Don't ask an employee to sign a contract in a language he or she cannot fully understand.
- ✗ Don't manage your domestic workers financial accounts, even if you think you are helping them.
- ✗ Don't make deductions from your domestic workers' paycheck for any reason if such deductions are not specified in the contract even if you are doing it to be helpful.
- ✗ Don't make any threats to your domestic worker, about such things as their health, safety or the safety of their loved ones, even if you do not intend to carry them out.
- ✗ Don't directly or indirectly limit their ability to interact with family and others in the community by restricting access to the phone or the computer on their own time, for example, or making it impossible for them to leave the home.
- ✗ Don't assume that none of these rules and laws apply to a member of your family. A spouse, a niece, any relative who performs labor in your home is still protected under labor trafficking and exploitation laws.