

# ~ Life in LAMORINDA ~

## Lamorinda Nannies founder provides matchmaking for families

By Sophie Braccini



Ashley Stewart, founder of Lamorinda Nannies

Photo provided

Ashley Stewart moved to Orinda three years ago with her family. She was a stay-at-home mother wanting to return to work doing something that revolved around parenting and was linked to the community. She looked for unmet needs and, from personal experience, found evidence of families struggling to identify and hire quality nannies who understood their parenting styles. Noticing a local need, Stewart opened the first Lamorinda nanny agency last January.

Stewart's primary focus is on finding full-time and part-time steady care. Through word of mouth, Stewart says she has started to build a network of professional experienced nannies who are excited about finding jobs close to their own homes. "A part-time nanny I employed myself has already referred three of her friends who want to work here," she says.

Stewart notes the diverse group of women she has decided to work with is made of professionals with many years of experience. Half of them are bilingual, speaking English and Spanish, but others also speak Mandarin or Farsi, or are monolingual.

Lamorinda Nannies charges families a flat placement fee, which covers the entire process and is charged only when the nanny starts working. The process begins with an interview of the whole family, if possible in their home, something Stewart

finds important because she wants to really understand the parenting style and the expectations of the parents. She then identifies candidates she knows and has already screened to introduce to her client.

Lamorinda Nannies pays for the nannies' background checks, which Stewart says is the industry protocol, and charges clients placement fees of \$3,800 for a full-time nanny, \$2,800 for part-time and \$800 for a temporary assignment. Stewart explains that the screening process, the interviews, and the verification of the references justify the fee. Their nannies usually charge between \$20 and \$25 per hour, with a few asking more depending on the range of their experience. She leaves the salary negotiation to the families.

Stewart also organizes the Trust-Line registration with the Department of Justice. The young mother says that properly vetting the candidates takes time and families who do it alone can get hundreds of resumes and can be overwhelmed by the process.

The interview process allows Stewart to uncover each of the nanny's unique styles. For example, she might ask specific questions about when a nanny disagreed with a family and how they handled that. The interview answers aren't shared with families, but help Stewart to get to know the nannies personally so she can create good matches for

them and for the families. Her objective is to send one or two candidates to each family.

Her experience with the placements has given Stewart some insight into what works best to create the best relationship between nannies and families. Her main focus is on communication; she gives the families and nannies a journal as they start working together where they can exchange notes. "The best nannies always talk about communication," Stewart says. "They know the parents are in control but need to be listening to what the nanny says."

Stewart adds she can continue to be in touch with both sides during the negotiation process, if needed. Sometimes it takes a few weeks or it can go very fast, and if for any reason the nanny or family ends employment within 60 days, she will find a replacement at no charge.

Stewart does not necessarily want to expand her agency beyond Lamorinda because she wants to maintain a personal touch. For more information, visit [www.lamorindanannies.com](http://www.lamorindanannies.com).



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