

Looking for some help around the house? Here are a few ways to go about finding a maid or nanny without breaking the law.

Hire through a service

This is convenient because you don't have to worry about sponsoring your maid or finding accommodation or transportation for her, and if you don't like the individual you can replace them easily. On the downside, services are often quite expensive and you can be sure that the people doing the work are only getting a small percentage of the amount you pay. Also, depending on the service you use, you may get a different person every time you need your cleaning done. Four to try:

- Al Nairab MNC 02 677 3365 or 050 687 0087
- Delight Cleaning Services www.delight.co.ae | 02 678 9217
- Exiles Maid Services www.exilemaidservice.ae | 02 559 0748
- Modern Cleaning Methods Company www.modernmethodsc.com 02 645 2825

Sponsor

Legally you can only sponsor maids from India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Ethiopia, Bangladesh, and Indonesia (and it is illegal to bring someone into the country on a visitor's visa and then change their sponsorship).

When you hire a maid directly from her home country, you can be sure her sponsorship is legal – plus she'll be working for you and only you. However, it's difficult to hire someone you've never met for a fulltime position, and if you find you have to break the sponsorship, you must wait a full year before you can sponsor anyone else.

There are plenty of agencies in places like India, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines that screen potential employees before sending them to meet you. A good starting point is the embassy of the country from which you'd like to hire.

Once you've found a maid you like, take the following documents to the Ministry of Interior Department of Naturalization and Residence on Al Saada/19th St:

- Application signed by sponsor
- Copy of your maid's passport, valid for at least six months
- Copy of your passport
- Salary certificate and labour contract from your employer indicating that you earn at least AED 6,000 per year

You may need to produce the originals for verification.

You must pay to the State Treasury annually the equivalent of the annual salary of the maid. This is a minimum of AED 400 per month (you're free to pay more, even if you claim this dismal amount).

In addition to sponsorship, you'll also need to provide a health card and accommodation for your maid. You can either have her live with you or you can provide her with additional salary to cover the cost of her own accommodation. You're also legally required to provide her with airfare back home at least once every two years.

Transfer sponsorship

The benefit of hiring someone who's already in the country is that you can meet her and get to know her, either personally or via references, before you hire her. Also, it's a lot easier to find someone who's already here. The tricky part is that the laws governing sponsorship are quite strict and employing someone without the proper sponsorship can cost you and her fines of up to AED 10,000 plus jail time.

The best way to find someone who's already in the country and looking for a job is to ask around. Nearly every maid, nanny, driver and clerk in town has a friend, sister, cousin, or mother looking for a job.

You can also check the noticeboards at Abela, Spinneys, and the St Andrews playgroup; the online forums and noticeboards can be useful; and of course there's the classified ads section of Abu Dhabi Week and other publications.

Note that ...

- You can transfer sponsorship from one local to another, from expat to expat, or from a local to an expat – but not from expat to local.
- Your maid must do the same job for you as she did for her previous sponsor (so if she was allowed to work as a teacher's aide for her last sponsor, she can't now work as a maid for you)

- Your maid should hold a valid Residence Permit
- Your maid should have completed at least one full year in the service of her previous sponsor

Hire someone on her own sponsorship

If you only need part-time help, the easiest option is to employ someone who is already sponsored by her husband, father, or brother (it is illegal to employ someone who is sponsored to work for someone else, though plenty of people do this). Your best bet is to ask around and check all the notice boards and classified ads.

If you find these instructions have changed or have any useful information to add, let us know via editor@AbuDhabiWeek.com and we'll post an update.

[Originally published in Abu Dhabi Week vol 2 issue 22]