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Tagging the nannies

Stroller license plates let passers-by report lapses

BY JORDAN LITE
DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

While nanny is minding the baby, passersby now can rat out a Mary Poppins who's less than practically perfect in every way.

Under a plan pushed by a New York City prosecutor, all they'll have to do is take down the "license plate" on the tot's stroller and send an e-mail to the parents.

The plates are registered to www.howsmynanny.com, a site where informants can plug in the tag's unique number to alert parents to a nanny's indiscretions.

Unlike the vague, gossipy "bad nanny" sightings that proliferate on mommy blogs but don't necessarily reach a tots' parents, "There's no guesswork. You don't have to say, 'Is this my nanny?'" said Jill Starishevsky, the assistant district attorney hawking the plates.

Buyers pay \$50 for a 4-inch-by-7-inch plate and private access to notes from tipsters, who can remain anonymous.

"It sounds like a good idea," said Juliana Zinger, 40, a mother of three. "There's nothing better than getting feedback on our nanny."

Some baby-sitters said that, like "nanny-cams," the plates might catch caretakers who lose their patience or let kids cry for long stretches.

But Barbara Nusbaum said she'd never purchase the plate to monitor her 19-month-old daughter's part-time nanny. "It's perpetuating values in our culture of suspicion and hyper-perfect child care," she said.

"If a nanny is doing her job, she shouldn't have a problem with the plate," said Katrina Pryor, 39, who was wheeling her 2-year-old charge along Amsterdam Ave. on Tuesday.

A stroller plate is unlikely to stop abuse, which usually happens behind closed doors, said Christine Deyss, executive director of the New York chapter of Prevent Child Abuse America.

"It's going to end up backfiring, because this type of surveillance creates a hostile work environment and makes it hard for nannies to do their jobs," said Ai-Jen Poo of Domestic Workers United, which advocates for the 200,000 nannies and housekeepers in the metro area.

Starishevsky admitted the system isn't perfect: Parents could find themselves in the position of receiving reports about themselves.

"So when my husband is doing pop-o-wheelies with the stroller, someone can tell me he's doing an illegal act?" joked Jo-el Shea, who was jogging with her 14-week-old son in Central Park this week.



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Assistant District Attorney Jill Starishevsky, inventor of HowsMyNanny.com, with daughter Ally, 2, in Manhattan.



HowsMyNanny.com plate numbers allow tipsters to contact a parent if they see a nanny mistreat a kid.



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