RELOCATE2UAE | LIFESTYLE & FAMILY GUIDE

Employing Domestic Staff in the UAE

The employer's guide for families hiring a nanny, housekeeper or driver, 2026/27

Sponsorship · costs · contracts · leave · accommodation · rights

Last verified 23 November 2026 | Next review 23 February 2027
relocate2uae.com/employing-domestic-staff-uae

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Hiring a nanny, housekeeper or driver in the UAE makes you a legal employer with duties that run every day of the contract: wages on time, rest and leave, suitable accommodation, health insurance, an annual permit renewal, and a proper exit when it ends. This guide covers all of it, from sponsorship to the final settlement, with every rule checked against UAE law and MOHRE, the ministry that regulates domestic work.

Last verified 23 November 2026 · Next review 23 February 2027 · Relocate2UAE Editorial Team

Most guides to domestic staff in the UAE are written by recruitment agencies and stop at the point of hire. This one is written for the family that has to run the arrangement for years. It separates what the law requires from what is simply common, flags where published sources disagree, and tells you who to call when something goes wrong. If you are still choosing between sponsoring a worker yourself, using an agency or booking hourly help, start with our Hiring a Maid or Nanny in the UAE guide and come back here once you have chosen.

The short answer

- **Domestic staff have their own law.** Nannies, housekeepers, cooks and private drivers are covered by Federal Decree-Law No. 9 of 2022 on Domestic Workers, not the general UAE Labour Law, and MOHRE regulates them. LAW
- **To sponsor directly, an expatriate needs a family income of at least AED 25,000 a month,** a valid residence visa and proof of housing. Below that, hire through a licensed agency that sponsors the worker. OFFICIAL
- **A resident's sponsorship is renewed every year.** MOHRE issues the domestic worker permit for one year to expatriate residents, two years to UAE and GCC citizens, and one or two years to Golden Visa holders and diplomats. OFFICIAL
- **Your fixed duties:** wages in dirhams within 10 days of the due date, 12 hours' rest a day, one paid day off a week, 30 days' paid leave a year, a return ticket home every two years, suitable accommodation, meals, and health insurance you pay for. LAW OFFICIAL
- **The worker keeps their own passport and Emirates ID.** Holding them is against the law. LAW
- **A worker may only work for the sponsor named on their permit.** Employing someone else's worker, or a worker on a visit visa, carries a fine of AED 50,000 to AED 200,000. LAW
- **Budget about AED 3,500 to 4,500 a month all-in** for a directly sponsored live-in nanny once salary, permit renewal, insurance, food and the flight home are spread across two years. ESTIMATE
- **End-of-service gratuity is unsettled.** The 2022 law leaves the formula to a Cabinet decision we could not find, so agree any end-of-contract payment in writing. LAW VERIFY

How to read this guide

Every factual claim carries a source tag so you can see how much weight it will bear.

Tag	What it means
LAW	Set by UAE federal legislation, mainly Federal Decree-Law No. 9 of 2022 and its Executive Regulations (Cabinet Resolution No. 106 of 2022). Stable until the law changes.
OFFICIAL	Published by a government body or a government-mandated insurer, such as MOHRE, u.ae, ICP or Daman.
MARKET	Current practice or pricing among agencies, insurers and families. Varies between providers.

Tag	What it means
REPORTED	Reported consistently by reputable UAE news or professional sources but not confirmed on a primary government page we could access.
VERIFY	Rules differ between sources or change often. Confirm with the named authority before you act.
ESTIMATE	Our own worked example. Useful for planning, not a quote.

Important information

This guide is general information only. It is not legal, immigration, employment, tax or financial advice, and it does not take your personal circumstances into account. Rules, fees and procedures change, and authorities can apply them differently from how they are published. Before you sign a contract, pay a fee, sponsor a worker or end an employment, check the current position with MOHRE or the relevant authority and take advice from a qualified professional where the point matters. For employment and immigration questions in the UAE, Davidson & Co. (a Relocate2UAE partner) is one firm that advises on these matters. Relocate2UAE accepts no responsibility for any loss arising from reliance on this guide. Please read the full Legal notice at the end.

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1. Domestic staff in the UAE at a glance

Question	Answer	Source
Which law applies?	Federal Decree-Law No. 9 of 2022 Concerning Domestic Workers, amended by Federal Decree-Law No. 21 of 2023, with Cabinet Resolution No. 106 of 2022	LAW
Who regulates it?	Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation (MOHRE)	LAW
Which roles count as domestic work?	19 professions, including housemaid, housekeeper, nanny, cook, private driver, gardener, home nurse, private tutor and personal trainer	OFFICIAL
Income needed to sponsor directly	Family income of at least AED 25,000 a month for expatriate residents	OFFICIAL
Permit length for an expatriate sponsor	One year, renewable	OFFICIAL
Worker age	18 or over. MOHRE applies an upper limit of 60 for new permits, with a narrow exception	LAW OFFICIAL
Contract	MOHRE standard contract, in writing, with the job, wage, rest, leave and probation set out	LAW

Question	Answer	Source
Probation	Up to six months	LAW
Daily rest	At least 12 hours, including 8 consecutive hours	LAW
Weekly rest	One paid day off	LAW
Annual leave	At least 30 paid days a year	LAW
Sick leave	Up to 30 days a year: 15 on full pay, 15 on half pay	LAW
Flight home	Return ticket every two years, paid by the employer	LAW
Minimum wage	None set by UAE law. Some home countries set their own	LAW REPORTED
Health insurance	Compulsory and paid by the sponsor	OFFICIAL
Gratuity	Left by the law to a Cabinet decision we could not find	LAW VERIFY
Fine for employing an unauthorised worker	AED 50,000 to AED 200,000	LAW
Help and complaints	MOHRE 80084 (claims and advice), 600 590000 (general)	OFFICIAL

2. Who counts as domestic staff, and why it matters

A domestic worker is anyone employed to work in or for a private household, and UAE law lists 19 such professions. OFFICIAL The ones families most often employ are:

- **Housemaid** (general cleaning, laundry and household work)
- **Housekeeper** (often a senior role running the household and other staff)
- **Nanny or babysitter**
- **Cook**
- **Private or family driver**
- **Gardener**
- **Home nurse or caregiver**
- **Private tutor** and **personal trainer**
- **Personal assistant**

The full list also covers guards, farm workers, sailors, shepherds, falcon carers, jockeys and private agricultural engineers. OFFICIAL

Why it matters: domestic staff are not covered by the UAE Labour Law that governs your own job. They have their own law, their own standard contract, their own dispute process and different entitlements. Rules you know from your own contract, such as the gratuity formula or notice periods, do not carry across automatically. LAW Our UAE Employment Guide covers the Labour Law, which is the one that applies to you.

Job titles matter

The permit names one profession. A worker hired as a housemaid should not be put to work in your business, and a domestic worker may not be employed in work outside the scope of the domestic workers law without MOHRE's approval. REPORTED If your housemaid will also do the school run, check how the role should be recorded and make sure she holds a UAE driving licence (Section 4.3).

3. Your three ways to employ someone legally

MOHRE recognises three service models, and the choice decides who is the legal employer. OFFICIAL

	Direct sponsorship	Agency-sponsored worker	Hourly or flexible help
Who holds the permit and visa?	You	A licensed recruitment office	A licensed company
Income test for you?	Yes, AED 25,000 a month family income for expatriates	No	No
Who carries the employer duties in this guide?	You	Mostly the agency, under your agreement with it	The company
Usual arrangement	Full time, usually live-in	Full time, live-in or live-out	By the hour, day, week or month
Best for	Families settled for two years or more who want one trusted person	New arrivals and households below the income threshold	Cleaning a few hours a week

The rest of this guide is written mainly for **direct sponsorship**, because that is where every legal duty falls on you. If your worker is on an agency's sponsorship, the agency is the employer, but many of the practical points still apply: you set the hours in your home, you share responsibility for how the worker is treated, and you must never let them work for anyone else. Check your agency agreement for who pays for leave, the flight home and insurance.

For route-by-route costs, agency refund rules and a route finder, see Hiring a Maid or Nanny in the UAE.

4. Hiring a nanny, housekeeper or driver

4.1 Before you hire anyone

1. **Write the job down.** Duties, working days, start and finish times, whether the role is live-in, whether you travel, and what is not part of the job. A clear brief is the single best predictor of a long, happy arrangement. MARKET
2. **Use only licensed channels.** A MOHRE-licensed recruitment office, an agency that sponsors the worker, or a worker who is transferring to you lawfully from another sponsor. MOHRE reported 138 licensed and active domestic worker recruitment offices in mid-2026. REPORTED Check any office against MOHRE's current approved list, whatever name it trades under.
3. **Never hire through social media adverts** or a worker who says she has "her own visa". MOHRE and the police have repeatedly warned about unlicensed recruitment through social media. REPORTED
4. **Interview properly and check references yourself.** Ask previous UAE employers about reliability, honesty and how the worker left.
5. **Agree the salary before the paperwork.** The contract must state it, and the worker must be told the nature of the job and the wage before recruitment. LAW

4.2 Role-by-role guide

Role	What to check	Typical monthly salary (AED)	Watch for
Housemaid	Experience with your size of home, cooking, laundry, pets	1,200 to 2,200 MARKET	Vague duties that grow into a 7-day role
Nanny	Ages of children cared for before, first aid, swimming supervision, sleep and feeding routines, English level	1,600 to 3,000 MARKET	Evening babysitting assumed but not agreed or paid
Housekeeper or house manager	Running a household, managing other staff, budgets, supplier dealings	Above housemaid ranges; no reliable survey MARKET VERIFY	Handing over cash and cards without a written process
Cook	Cuisines, dietary needs, food hygiene, shopping on a budget	1,500 to 4,000 MARKET	Shopping cash with no receipts
Private driver	UAE driving licence, clean record, knowledge of your routes, experience with children in the car	2,500 to 4,500 MARKET	A home-country licence only, or no insurance cover for him
Home caregiver	Experience with the condition involved, lifting and mobility, medication routines	1,800 to 3,000 MARKET	Night duties eating into the legal rest period

Salary ranges are drawn from UAE agency surveys published in 2026 and are indicative only. Experienced English-speaking nannies, drivers and house managers with strong references are often paid well above them. There is no statutory minimum wage for domestic workers in UAE law, but some home countries set one for their citizens as a condition of letting them work abroad. The Philippines, for example, applies USD 400 a month for Gulf countries. LAW REPORTED

4.3 Hiring a private driver: the extra checks

A driver is a domestic worker like any other, but the car adds risks that the other roles do not.

- **A UAE driving licence is essential.** A resident driving in the UAE needs a UAE licence; a home-country or international licence alone is not enough once the worker is resident. REPORTED Whether a foreign licence can be exchanged or a full course and tests are needed depends on the country that issued it. Our UAE Driving and Vehicle Guide explains the exchange list.
- **Expect to be asked for a no-objection letter.** As the sponsor, you may need to give your driver a written no-objection letter before a driving school or traffic authority will open a file. Dubai's RTA dropped the general requirement in 2020, but some schools and emirates still ask for it for domestic workers. REPORTED VERIFY
- **Check your motor insurance.** Many UAE policies restrict cover by the driver's age and how long they have held a UAE licence. Confirm in writing that your policy covers your driver before he takes the car out. MARKET
- **Agree how fines and tolls are handled.** Traffic fines are recorded against the vehicle and usually have to be cleared at renewal. You cannot simply deduct them from wages: the law allows deductions only in limited cases and caps them at a quarter of the wage (Section 9.2). Agree a written process and take advice before deducting anything. LAW VERIFY

- **Plan for the school run.** Agree waiting time, whether the driver may use the car for anything else, and who pays for fuel and Salik or Darb tolls when he runs errands.

4.4 Bringing a nanny or housekeeper with you from abroad

You can sponsor a worker who has worked for your family abroad, once your own residence visa is issued and you meet the income condition. The worker must be between 18 and 60, and until her UAE permit and visa are issued she cannot legally work for you in the UAE. OFFICIAL Some home countries add their own steps. Indian workers who need emigration clearance, for example, must be processed through the Government of India's e-Migrate system with documents attested through the consulate, and the employer may need to attend an interview at the consulate after arrival. REPORTED Ask your home country's embassy what applies before you book travel.

5. Sponsorship and legal requirements

5.1 Who can sponsor a domestic worker

MOHRE accepts applications from UAE citizens, GCC citizens, diplomats, Golden Visa holders, and resident employers or investors who hold a valid residence permit. OFFICIAL

Condition	Requirement	Source
Income	A salary certificate confirming the family's income is not less than AED 25,000 a month, or three months of bank statements showing at least AED 25,000 a month	OFFICIAL
Combined income	MOHRE's wording refers to the family's income. Press reports say a couple's salaries can be combined, but outcomes have been inconsistent	OFFICIAL REPORTED VERIFY
Housing	A tenancy contract or title deed for your home. Dubai service centres are reported to ask for at least a two-bedroom property	OFFICIAL REPORTED
Marital status	Marriage certificate and your spouse's residence visa, where relevant	OFFICIAL
More than five workers	A written explanation of why you need another worker	OFFICIAL
Golden Visa holders	Reported to be able to sponsor domestic workers without a cap on numbers	REPORTED
Blue Residency holders	Reported to be able to sponsor an unlimited number of domestic workers, subject to financial capacity	REPORTED

Single people and single parents. MOHRE's published conditions ask for proof of marital status and a spouse's visa "if applicable", and do not exclude single applicants in the text we reviewed. Press reports describe single parents needing case-by-case approval. Confirm with a MOHRE service centre before you commit. OFFICIAL REPORTED VERIFY

5.2 How long sponsorship lasts

MOHRE issues the domestic worker permit for one year to expatriate residents. UAE and GCC citizens receive two years, and diplomats and Golden Visa holders can choose one or two years. OFFICIAL

That means most expatriate families renew their worker's permit and residence visa **every year**, with a medical test, Emirates ID renewal and insurance renewal each time, even though the standard employment contract itself runs for two years. OFFICIAL LAW Put the renewal date in your calendar and

start the process early: a lapsed visa can lead to fines and stop the worker working legally. REPORTED

5.3 The sponsorship process step by step

Since 13 October 2025, domestic worker permits, residence visas, medical tests and Emirates ID applications can be handled through MOHRE's Work Bundle platform at workinuae.ae, using UAE PASS, with one application and one payment. OFFICIAL

1. **Check your eligibility.** Income, residence visa, housing and, if needed, marriage certificate. OFFICIAL
2. **Choose the worker through a licensed channel** and agree the job and salary in writing. LAW
3. **Apply for the work permit** through the Work Bundle, the MOHRE website or app, a MOHRE business service centre or Tawseel. MOHRE gives two working days for the permit once the file is complete. Business service centre commission is capped at AED 72. OFFICIAL
4. **Sign the MOHRE standard contract.** It must set out the job, wage, rest, leave and probation, and the worker keeps a copy. LAW
5. **Entry permit or change of status.** If the worker is abroad, an entry permit is issued. If she is already in the UAE, her previous visa must be cancelled first. OFFICIAL
6. **Medical fitness test.** The worker must be declared fit before the residence visa is issued. OFFICIAL REPORTED
7. **Health insurance.** Buy a compliant policy in your name as sponsor before the visa is issued (Section 6.3). OFFICIAL
8. **Emirates ID biometrics and residence visa.** Once issued, give the worker her passport and Emirates ID to keep. LAW

The full process from application to Emirates ID is commonly reported at two to four weeks. REPORTED

5.4 Documents you will need

From you, the sponsor OFFICIAL

- Passport copy and Emirates ID
- Proof of marital status and your spouse's residence visa, if applicable
- Tenancy contract (Ejari in Dubai, Tawtheeq in Abu Dhabi) or title deed
- Salary certificate showing family income of at least AED 25,000 a month, or three months of bank statements

From the worker OFFICIAL

- Passport, valid for at least three months
- Colour photograph
- If already in the UAE: current visa, and cancellation of the previous visa

5.5 The one rule that catches most families out

A domestic worker may only work for the person or licensed company that holds their permit. LAW

- **AED 50,000 to AED 200,000** fine for employing a domestic worker without a work permit, including someone sponsored by another family or on a visit visa. LAW
- **AED 5,000 per worker** administrative fine for employing without a permit, or for letting your own worker work for someone else. LAW
- **Lending your worker** to a friend or neighbour for payment is not allowed. The regulations allow a narrow exception for relatives up to the second degree, with the worker's consent. LAW

If you need extra help on a few evenings, book it through a licensed hourly service rather than paying another family's worker.

6. Costs and ongoing obligations

6.1 What you pay for

Cost	How often	Who pays	Source
Salary	Monthly, within 10 days of the due date	You	LAW
Recruitment fee, if you use an agency to find the worker	Once	You. Charging the worker is prohibited	LAW
Work permit, residence visa, medical test, Emirates ID	Every year for expatriate sponsors	You	OFFICIAL
Health insurance	Every year	You	OFFICIAL
Accommodation, meals and work clothing	Ongoing	You	LAW
Return ticket home	Every two years, and at the end of the contract in most cases	You	LAW
Annual leave pay	30 days a year	You	LAW
Cover while the worker is on leave	As needed	You, if you want it	MARKET
Phone and Wi-Fi	Monthly	Not required, but standard practice	MARKET

6.2 Government and visa costs

MOHRE publishes the permit fee structure by emirate, with separate fees for Dubai and for the other emirates and for one-year and two-year permits, and says its own service is free through its website and app apart from federal charges. OFFICIAL The full package of permit, entry permit, medical test, Emirates ID and residence visa is reported at around AED 9,600 for a one-year visa for an expatriate sponsor through some service providers. REPORTED VERIFY Prices differ between centres and emirates, so ask for an itemised quote before you pay.

Some sponsors are also asked for a refundable deposit or guarantee. REPORTED VERIFY

6.3 Health insurance by emirate

Health insurance for a domestic worker is compulsory, is a condition of the residence visa, and must be paid by the sponsor. MOHRE's 2026 guidance confirms that employers, including sponsors of domestic workers, bear the full cost. OFFICIAL REPORTED

Emirate	What applies	Indicative annual premium (AED)	Source
Abu Dhabi	Daman basic plan for domestic helpers of non-UAE nationals, from 20 February 2026	918.80 (age 18 to 40), 1,921.50 (41 to 59), 8,822 (60 and over), excluding VAT; maternity surcharge of 750 for married women aged 18 to 50	OFFICIAL
Dubai	At least the Essential Benefits Plan under the Dubai health insurance law	Around 550 to 650	REPORTED
Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al Quwain, Ras Al Khaimah, Fujairah	MOHRE's basic health insurance package, a condition of residency since 1 January 2025	320	OFFICIAL

The basic plans are deliberately limited. If your nanny travels with you, or you want cover closer to what you would expect for anyone living in your home, compare an upgraded plan. Pacific Prime (a Relocate2UAE partner) is one broker that can quote, and our UAE Healthcare Guide explains how the plan tiers work.

6.4 Worked example: what a live-in nanny really costs

Assumptions ESTIMATE: Abu Dhabi, direct sponsorship of a 30-year-old nanny through a licensed office. Salary AED 2,200 a month. Recruitment fee AED 8,000. Permit and visa package AED 9,600 a year. Daman basic plan AED 965 a year including VAT. Food and toiletries AED 400 a month. Return flight AED 1,800, due in year two. No paid cover during leave.

AED	Year 1	Year 2
Salary	26,400	26,400
Recruitment fee	8,000	0
Permit, visa, medical, Emirates ID	9,600	9,600
Health insurance	965	965
Food and toiletries	4,800	4,800
Return flight home	0	1,800
Total	**49,765**	**43,565**

Over two years that is **AED 93,330, or about AED 3,890 a month**. In Dubai, with a cheaper basic insurance plan, the figure is slightly lower. A nanny paid AED 3,000 a month pushes the monthly average above AED 4,600. The first year is front-loaded, which is why direct sponsorship only pays off if the arrangement lasts.

Use the cost planner in our Domestic Staff Employer Toolkit to replace every figure with your own quotes. For how domestic help fits into a full household budget, see the UAE Cost of Living Guide.

6.5 Your employer calendar

When	What to do
Every month	Pay the salary on a fixed date, by bank transfer or WPS, and keep the record. Give the weekly rest day each week.

When	What to do
Every quarter	Check the leave balance and agree upcoming leave dates.
60 days before the permit expires	Start the renewal: medical test, insurance renewal, permit and residence visa, Emirates ID.
Every year	Renew health insurance. Review salary. Check passport validity; it must stay valid for the visa process.
Every two years	Return ticket home. Decide whether to renew the two-year contract.
At the end	Pay all dues within 10 days, provide the flight home where owed, cancel the permit and visa properly.

7. Employment contracts

7.1 What the contract must contain

The contract must be in writing on MOHRE's standard form, and the worker must receive a copy. It runs for two years and can be renewed for the same period. LAW It must set out:

- The parties and the place of work
- The type of work
- The wage and how it is paid
- The probation period, up to six months
- Daily and weekly rest
- Leave entitlements
- The circumstances in which it ends

The worker must give informed consent, knowing the job, the workplace, the pay and the rest periods before recruitment. LAW OFFICIAL

7.2 Probation

Probation can last up to six months. LAW If the worker came through a licensed office under the traditional package and does not work out during probation, refund rules apply. Our Hiring a Maid or Nanny guide explains them, with MOHRE's refund formula.

7.3 Write a house agreement as well

The MOHRE contract covers the legal minimum. Most of what causes friction sits outside it. A short house agreement signed by both of you, which can never give the worker less than the law does, should cover:

- **Hours:** start and finish times, and how the 12 hours of daily rest work in practice
- **The weekly rest day:** which day, and that it is genuinely free
- **Evening babysitting or extra hours:** how often, and the agreed extra pay
- **Leave:** how dates are agreed, and notice on both sides
- **Travel with the family:** whether it is expected, and how working days abroad are treated
- **Phone use** during working hours, and visitors in the home
- **Accommodation:** the room provided, or the housing arrangement for a live-out worker
- **Money:** pay date, method, any allowances, and how household cash is accounted for
- **End-of-contract payment,** if you are offering one (Section 10.4)

8. Working hours, rest and leave

UAE law does not set a maximum number of working hours for domestic workers. It sets minimum rest instead. LAW

Entitlement	What the law says	Source
Daily rest	At least 12 hours, including 8 consecutive hours	LAW
Weekly rest	One paid day. If the worker works it, a substitute rest day or an extra day's pay	LAW
Annual leave	At least 30 paid days a year. Two days a month if service is between six months and a year	LAW
Unused leave	Paid in cash when the contract ends	LAW
Sick leave	Up to 30 days per contract year with a medical report: first 15 on full pay, next 15 on half pay	LAW
Flight home	Return ticket every two years, paid by the employer	LAW
Public holidays	We did not find a separate public holiday entitlement for domestic workers in the 2022 law. Many families give the main holidays or pay extra	VERIFY

> **A schedule that works**
>
> A live-in nanny who starts at 7am and finishes at 7pm has 12 hours left for rest, with 8 of them unbroken overnight. Add regular night feeds or late babysitting and you are likely to breach the rest rule. If you need cover beyond a 12-hour day, plan for a second person or a licensed hourly service, not longer days. LAW ESTIMATE

8.1 Taking your staff on holiday with you

- **Ask, and agree it in writing.** Travel should be in the house agreement, with how working days abroad are treated. MARKET
- **Travel days are working days,** not annual leave, unless the worker agrees otherwise. MARKET
- **Check the destination's visa rules** for the worker's nationality well ahead. Schengen and UK visas can take weeks. MARKET
- **The worker carries her own passport.** She keeps it at all times, including abroad. LAW
- **Watch the six-month rule.** A UAE residence visa can lapse after more than six months continuously outside the UAE. OFFICIAL
- **Insurance:** the basic UAE plans are usually limited to the UAE. Buy travel cover for the trip. MARKET

8.2 When you travel and the worker stays home

The worker is still employed and still paid. Agree what work is expected, leave money for food, give emergency contacts, and make sure she keeps her weekly rest day. Leaving a worker alone with no food, money or contact breaches your duties to provide meals and treat the worker properly. LAW

9. Paying wages properly

9.1 When and how

- **Pay in UAE dirhams within 10 days of the due date.** LAW

- **Pay by bank transfer or WPS, never cash with no record.** If there is ever a dispute, a payment record is the only reliable proof. MARKET
- **WPS is compulsory for five domestic professions** (private trainer, private tutor, home caregiver, private representative and private agricultural engineer) and optional for the other 14, including housemaid, nanny, cook and driver. LAW OFFICIAL
- **Help the worker open a bank account** once her Emirates ID is issued. Our UAE Banking Guide covers the documents banks ask for.

9.2 Deductions

Deductions are capped at a quarter of the wage, and allowed only to recover damage the worker caused or a debt ordered by a court. LAW Do not deduct for breakages without evidence, for insurance or visa costs (which are yours), or for anything the worker has not agreed in writing. Recruitment costs can never be charged to the worker. LAW

10. Rights and responsibilities of employers and employees

10.1 Your duties as an employer

Article 11 of the domestic workers law sets the employer's core duties. LAW REPORTED

- Provide suitable accommodation, meals and the clothing needed for the work
- Provide the tools and facilities needed to do the job
- Pay the wage on time
- Pay for medical care, in practice through health insurance
- Treat the worker with respect and courtesy, and keep them safe
- Let the worker keep their own passport, Emirates ID and other personal documents
- Pay the cost of the worker's return home in the cases set by the law
- Employ the worker only in the profession on the permit

10.2 What the worker owes you

Article 12 sets the worker's duties. LAW REPORTED

- Do the work personally, carefully and as agreed
- Follow your reasonable instructions about the agreed work
- Look after your property and household
- Respect the privacy of your household and keep its affairs confidential
- Respect UAE laws, customs and traditions
- Work only for the employer named on the permit

10.3 What the law prohibits

Prohibited	Source
Employing anyone under 18	LAW
Charging the worker recruitment fees or commission	LAW
Holding the worker's passport or identity documents	LAW

Prohibited	Source
Discrimination on grounds of race, colour, gender, religion or political opinion	OFFICIAL
Harassment, abuse, forced labour or any form of exploitation	LAW
Employing a worker without a permit, or letting your worker work for others	LAW
Filing a false absence report	LAW

10.4 End-of-service gratuity: the honest position

The 2022 law does not set a gratuity formula for domestic workers. Article 22 says the Cabinet will adopt the rules, and we found no Cabinet decision doing so. LAW VERIFY The previous law, Federal Law No. 10 of 2017, gave 14 days' basic wage for each year of service, and many websites still quote that figure as if it applied today. LAW REPORTED Some advisers report that MOHRE's current position is that no statutory gratuity is payable until the Cabinet acts. REPORTED

What we suggest: decide what you will pay at the end of the contract, and write it into the house agreement. Many families pay the equivalent of the old 14-days-a-year formula as good practice, and it is a strong reason for a good worker to stay. If the amount is significant or disputed, Davidson & Co. (a Relocate2UAE partner) is worth speaking to.

10.5 Good practice beyond the legal minimum

The families who keep the same nanny or housekeeper for five or six years tend to do the same few things: a fixed day off that is genuinely free, salary paid on the same date every month by transfer, a clear end to the working day, a private lockable room, a pay rise on renewal, and an agreed end-of-contract payment. MARKET

11. Accommodation and working arrangements

11.1 Live-in or live-out

	Live-in	Live-out
Usual route	Direct sponsorship or agency	Agency-sponsored or hourly help
Accommodation	You must provide suitable accommodation in your home	The agency usually houses and transports the worker
Monthly cost	Lower, but you need the space	Higher fee
Flexibility	Early starts, evenings and travel are easier	Fixed hours, overtime by agreement
Privacy	Less, for both sides	More, for both sides
Main risk	Blurred working hours	Transport time and who pays for it

11.2 What "suitable accommodation" means

The law requires suitable accommodation and does not publish a room specification for private homes that we could find. LAW VERIFY In practice, a room that meets the standard most families and agencies expect has:

- **Privacy:** a room of the worker's own, with a door that locks from the inside
- **Air conditioning** and a window or proper ventilation
- **A bed, storage** and somewhere to keep personal belongings safely
- **Access to a bathroom** that the worker can use privately
- **No dual use:** not a storeroom, laundry or the children's bedroom

When you search for a home, check whether the "maid's room" in a listing has a window, air conditioning and its own bathroom. Our Dubai Area Guide and Abu Dhabi Area Guide flag which communities have villas and townhouses built with staff accommodation, and the UAE Housing Guide covers what to check before you sign.

11.3 Live-out workers and drivers

If you sponsor a worker who lives outside your home, you are still responsible for making sure they have suitable accommodation. How a housing allowance should be documented is a point of practice rather than settled law, so write it into the contract and confirm it with your service centre. LAW VERIFY Many villas include a separate driver's room; if yours does not, agree where your driver will live and how he gets to work.

11.4 Cameras, phones and freedom of movement

- **Cameras:** if you use cameras, keep them to shared areas of the home, tell the worker where they are, and never place one in the worker's room or bathroom. Recording people in private without consent can be a criminal offence in the UAE. REPORTED VERIFY
- **Phones:** you can agree limits on phone use during working hours. Taking a worker's phone away, or cutting off contact with family, is a different matter and is not acceptable. MARKET
- **The rest day is the worker's own.** You cannot require them to stay in the home on their day off. Agree a reasonable return time for a live-in worker, for everyone's peace of mind. MARKET

12. When things go wrong

12.1 Settle it early

Most problems are about hours, days off or money, and can be settled with a calm conversation and a written note of what was agreed. If not, MOHRE's claims and advice line is 80084, and complaints can also be raised through the MOHRE app or website. OFFICIAL

12.2 Disputes

- **MOHRE must try to settle a dispute first.** A court will not hear the case until MOHRE has dealt with it. LAW
- **MOHRE can issue a binding decision on claims up to AED 50,000,** following Federal Decree-Law No. 21 of 2023. Either side can appeal within 15 working days. LAW
- **Larger or unresolved claims** go to court. LAW

Our UAE Emergency and Problem-Solving Guide walks through MOHRE complaints step by step.

12.3 If your worker stops coming to work

You must notify MOHRE within five days of an unexcused absence. LAW In Dubai, absence reports are reported to be filed through Amer centres. REPORTED VERIFY Never file a report you know to be untrue: a malicious report carries a fine of AED 5,000 and can suspend your sponsor file. LAW

12.4 Ending the contract

A contract ends when it expires without renewal, by mutual agreement, or in defined cases such as the worker being absent without excuse for 10 consecutive days. Either side can also end it if the other breaches their legal duties. LAW The worker may leave after giving MOHRE two weeks' notice if the employer cuts her wage or breaches the contract, and immediately in cases of assault or abuse. LAW We found no fixed statutory notice period for the employer in the 2022 law, so follow your contract. VERIFY

When it ends:

1. **Pay everything owed within 10 days,** including salary to the last day and unused leave. LAW
2. **Provide the flight home** if the contract ends for a reason that is not the worker's fault. No ticket is owed if the worker transfers to a new employer in the UAE. LAW
3. **Pay any end-of-contract sum** you agreed (Section 10.4).
4. **Cancel the permit and residence visa** through MOHRE's channels or the Work Bundle. Do not let the visa simply lapse. OFFICIAL
5. **Keep signed receipts** for every payment.

12.5 Transferring a good worker to another family

If your worker wants to stay in the UAE and another family wants to employ her, a transfer can replace cancellation. The new sponsor applies for a new permit, and the worker must not start work for them until it is issued. OFFICIAL Help her by settling all dues and giving a reference.

12.6 When you leave the UAE

Cancel your worker's permit and visa before your own, as their sponsor, after paying all their dues. OFFICIAL REPORTED Our Leaving the UAE exit checklist puts this step in the right order with everything else.

13. Dubai, Abu Dhabi and the northern emirates

The law is federal and MOHRE runs the permit everywhere, but a few practical points differ.

	Dubai	Abu Dhabi	Northern emirates
Permit fees	Separate MOHRE fee schedule for Dubai	MOHRE schedule for all emirates except Dubai	MOHRE schedule for all emirates except Dubai
Basic health insurance	Essential Benefits Plan, around AED 550 to 650 REPORTED	Daman basic plan for domestic helpers, from AED 918.80 a year excluding VAT OFFICIAL	MOHRE basic package, AED 320 a year OFFICIAL
Residency services	Work Bundle, GDRFA, Amer centres OFFICIAL REPORTED	Work Bundle, ICP OFFICIAL	Work Bundle, ICP OFFICIAL
Tenancy proof	Ejari, reportedly two bedrooms or more REPORTED	Tawtheeq	Registered tenancy contract

14. What changed in 2025 and 2026

Date	Change	Source
20 February 2026	New Daman basic plan premiums in Abu Dhabi, including the domestic helper categories	OFFICIAL
H1 2026	MOHRE issued 135 fines against 42 recruitment offices, mostly for late refunds to families, and reported 138 licensed offices	REPORTED
July 2026	MOHRE guidance confirmed employers, including domestic worker sponsors, bear the full cost of health insurance	REPORTED
2026	Ministerial Resolution No. 340 of 2026 tightened wage payment deadlines for MOHRE-registered establishments, including recruitment offices that employ workers. It does not replace the domestic worker rules for families	REPORTED VERIFY
13 October 2025	Domestic worker permits, residency, medical tests and Emirates ID moved onto the Work Bundle platform (workinuae.ae)	OFFICIAL
1 January 2025	Basic health insurance became a condition of residency in the five northern emirates, at AED 320 a year	OFFICIAL

We found no amendment to the domestic workers law or its Executive Regulations in 2025 or 2026 as of the review date, and no Cabinet decision on domestic worker gratuity.

15. The employer's checklist

Before the worker starts

- ☐ Eligibility confirmed: income, residence visa, housing
- ☐ Worker found through a MOHRE-licensed channel
- ☐ Job brief, salary and rest day agreed in writing
- ☐ MOHRE contract signed and a copy given to the worker
- ☐ House agreement signed
- ☐ Room ready: private, air-conditioned, lockable
- ☐ Health insurance bought in your name
- ☐ Permit, medical, Emirates ID and residence visa complete
- ☐ Passport and Emirates ID handed to the worker to keep
- ☐ For a driver: UAE licence checked, motor insurance confirmed in writing

Every month

- ☐ Salary paid by transfer within 10 days of the due date
- ☐ Weekly rest day given; daily rest respected

Every year

- ☐ Permit, visa and insurance renewed before expiry
- ☐ Leave taken or scheduled
- ☐ Salary reviewed

At the end

- ☐ All dues paid within 10 days, with receipts
- ☐ Flight home provided where owed

☐ Permit and visa cancelled, or transfer completed

16. Interactive tool: Domestic Staff Employer Toolkit

Use our free **Domestic Staff Employer Toolkit**. It estimates the true annual cost of a nanny, housekeeper or driver in your emirate, calculates leave owed and final dues when a contract ends, builds your renewal and ticket calendar from the permit date, and gives you a printable compliance checklist. It runs in your browser, stores nothing and works offline once loaded.

17. Common mistakes employers make

1. **Assuming a two-year visa.** For expatriate sponsors the permit is renewed every year. OFFICIAL
2. **Paying another family's worker** for a few hours. The fine starts at AED 50,000. LAW
3. **Holding the worker's passport "for safekeeping".** It is the worker's right to keep it. LAW
4. **Paying cash with no record.** You have nothing to show MOHRE in a dispute.
5. **Building 14-hour days** into a live-in role and breaching the 12-hour rest rule. LAW
6. **Treating the rest day as optional,** or expecting the worker to stay in on it.
7. **Letting a driver use a home-country licence,** or not checking the motor policy covers him.
8. **Deducting fines or breakages** beyond what the law allows. LAW
9. **Relying on online gratuity figures** that quote the repealed 2017 formula as current law.
10. **Letting the visa lapse** instead of cancelling it properly when the arrangement ends.

18. Related Relocate2UAE guides

If you need	Read
Choosing between direct sponsorship, an agency or hourly help, and agency refunds	Hiring a Maid or Nanny in the UAE
Your own employment rights under the Labour Law	UAE Employment Guide
Your residence visa and family sponsorship	UAE Visa Requirements Guide
Health insurance tiers and how to use them	UAE Healthcare Guide
Licences, insurance and tolls for your driver	UAE Driving and Vehicle Guide
Homes with staff accommodation	UAE Housing Guide
Budgeting for help at home	UAE Cost of Living Guide
Nanny, nursery or both	Moving to Dubai With a Family and Nurseries in Abu Dhabi
A dispute with an employee or agency	UAE Emergency and Problem-Solving Guide
Cancelling your worker's visa when you leave	Leaving the UAE exit checklist

Not every family needs full-time help. For children under four, a good nursery offers structure, qualified staff and other children, and many families combine nursery or school in the morning with a nanny in the afternoon. Little Land Nursery (a Relocate2UAE partner) is one early years option in Abu

Dhabi.

19. Frequently asked questions

What are my legal obligations as a domestic worker employer in the UAE?

You must pay the agreed wage in dirhams within 10 days of the due date, give at least 12 hours' rest a day and one paid day off a week, provide 30 days' paid leave a year, suitable accommodation, meals and work clothing, pay for health insurance, provide a return ticket home every two years, and let the worker keep their passport. **LAW**

How much do I need to earn to sponsor a nanny or maid in the UAE?

Expatriate residents need a family income of at least AED 25,000 a month, shown by a salary certificate or three months of bank statements. If you earn less, you can still employ help legally through a licensed agency that sponsors the worker. **OFFICIAL**

How long is a maid or nanny visa valid in the UAE?

For an expatriate resident sponsor, MOHRE issues the domestic worker permit for one year, so the permit and residence visa are renewed every year. UAE and GCC citizens receive two years, and Golden Visa holders and diplomats can choose one or two years. **OFFICIAL**

How much does it cost to employ a full-time nanny in the UAE?

Salaries typically run from AED 1,600 to 3,000 a month. Once the yearly permit and visa, health insurance, food and the flight home are added, a directly sponsored live-in nanny usually costs around AED 3,500 to 4,500 a month averaged over two years. **MARKET ESTIMATE**

How many hours can a domestic worker work in the UAE?

The law sets no maximum hours. It requires at least 12 hours of rest a day, including 8 consecutive hours, and one paid day off each week. **LAW**

How many days of annual leave does a nanny get in the UAE?

At least 30 paid days a year, or two days a month if service is between six months and a year. Unused leave is paid in cash when the contract ends. **LAW**

Do domestic workers get public holidays in the UAE?

We did not find a separate public holiday entitlement for domestic workers in the 2022 law. Many families give the main public holidays off or pay extra for them. Confirm with MOHRE if it matters to your arrangement. **VERIFY**

Do I have to give my maid her own room?

You must provide suitable accommodation. The law does not publish a room specification for private homes, but a private, air-conditioned room with a lock, storage and access to a bathroom is the standard most families and agencies work to. **LAW MARKET**

Do I have to pay end-of-service gratuity to my nanny?

The 2022 law leaves the gratuity rules to a Cabinet decision that we could not find, and the 14-days-a-year formula quoted online comes from the repealed 2017 law. Many families pay an agreed end-of-contract sum anyway. Put it in writing, and take advice if the amount is significant. **LAW VERIFY**

Is health insurance mandatory for domestic workers?

Yes. It is a condition of the residence visa in every emirate and the sponsor must pay for it. Basic plans cost about AED 320 a year in the northern emirates, around AED 550 to 650 in Dubai, and from

AED 918.80 a year plus VAT in Abu Dhabi. OFFICIAL REPORTED

Can I keep my maid's passport?

No. The worker has the legal right to keep their own passport and identity documents. LAW

Can I deduct money from my maid's salary?

Only to recover damage the worker caused or a court-ordered debt, and never more than a quarter of the wage. Visa, insurance and recruitment costs are yours and cannot be deducted. LAW

Can my driver use his home-country driving licence?

Not once he is a UAE resident. He needs a UAE licence, either by exchanging an eligible foreign licence or by passing the UAE course and tests. You may be asked for a no-objection letter as his sponsor. REPORTED VERIFY

Who pays my driver's traffic fines?

Fines are recorded against the vehicle and must be cleared, usually at renewal. You cannot simply deduct them from the driver's wages, because deductions are limited by law. Agree a written process and take advice before deducting anything. LAW VERIFY

Can my nanny travel abroad with my family?

Yes, with her agreement and a visa for the destination where needed. Travel days count as working days, she keeps her own passport, and she should not stay outside the UAE for more than six months in a row. LAW OFFICIAL MARKET

Can my housemaid work in my business or for a friend?

No. A domestic worker may only do domestic work for the employer named on the permit. Lending a worker for payment is not allowed, apart from a narrow exception for close relatives with the worker's consent. LAW

Can I hire a part-time maid who has her own visa?

No. Employing a domestic worker who is sponsored by someone else or is on a visit visa can lead to a fine of AED 50,000 to AED 200,000. Book hourly help through a licensed company instead. LAW

Is WPS mandatory for domestic workers?

For five professions: private trainer, private tutor, home caregiver, private representative and private agricultural engineer. It is optional for the other 14, including housemaid, nanny, cook and driver. Pay by bank transfer either way. LAW OFFICIAL

What should I do if my maid runs away?

Notify MOHRE within five days of an unexcused absence; in Dubai this is reported to be through Amer centres. Do not file a report you know to be untrue, which carries a fine of AED 5,000. LAW REPORTED

How do I end a domestic worker's contract?

Follow the contract's terms, pay all dues within 10 days including unused leave, provide the flight home if the ending is not the worker's fault, and cancel the permit and visa through MOHRE or the Work Bundle. LAW OFFICIAL

Where do I go if there is a dispute with my domestic worker?

MOHRE on 80084, or through the MOHRE app or website. MOHRE must try to settle the dispute first and can issue a binding decision on claims up to AED 50,000. LAW OFFICIAL

20. Primary sources

Legislation

- Federal Decree-Law No. 9 of 2022 Concerning Domestic Workers, consolidated text, uaelegislation.gov.ae
- Federal Decree-Law No. 21 of 2023 amending certain provisions of Federal Decree-Law No. 9 of 2022
- Cabinet Resolution No. 106 of 2022, Executive Regulations of the domestic workers law
- Ministerial Resolution No. 675 of 2022 on WPS coverage of certain domestic work professions
- Federal Law No. 10 of 2017 on Support Service Workers (repealed; cited for the former gratuity rule)

Official

- MOHRE: Issuance of a New Work Permit, Domestic Workers (conditions, documents, permit duration, service channels)
- MOHRE: Domestic Workers Employers' Guide (awareness package for employers)
- MOHRE: Domestic workers guidance and awareness portal
- MOHRE news, 13 October 2025: Domestic Worker Services on the Work Bundle platform
- MOHRE news, 16 December 2024: basic health insurance package for private sector and domestic workers
- MOHRE news, 13 April 2023: WPS registration optional for 14 domestic professions
- u.ae: Domestic helpers (professions, obligations, services)
- Daman (National Health Insurance Company): New premiums for Abu Dhabi Basic Plan, effective 20 February 2026

Reporting

We also reviewed reporting and Q&A from Gulf News, Khaleej Times, The National, WAM, Zawya and Emirates 24|7, guidance from UAE law firms, and recruitment agency pages. We treated agency and marketplace pages as leads, not sources, and checked their claims against the primary sources above where those pages were available. Two examples of claims we did not adopt: agency pages that state a two-year visa for all sponsors, and pages that quote the repealed 2017 gratuity formula as current law.

About this guide

Written and verified by the Relocate2UAE editorial team. Last verified 23 November 2026. Next review 23 February 2027, or sooner if a fee, procedure or rule changes. If you spot something out of date, tell us at info@relocate2uae.com and we will check it.

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