Like Uber, But For Kids

Insights
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What would it be like if Care.com and Uber had a baby? A handful of Uber-like rideshare services that have sprung up across the country are illustrating exactly what would happen. These start-ups target well-off parents who are short on time and have kids with multiple obligations after school and on weekends. They offer safe, reliable, pre-scheduled rides to get unaccompanied kids and teens where they need to go.

The kid ride-sharing industry is another gig economy invention that outsources chores to an on-demand workforce. Many of the drivers for these companies are retired police officers, retired teachers, stay-at-home parents, and older students – all people who enjoy having a side hustle. An overwhelming majority of the drivers are women. The kid ride-sharing industry represents yet another way for people looking for gig work to get in on the action.

The two biggest challenges for these start-ups are finding drivers and getting parents to trust them. For example, drivers hoping to work for Kango must have several years of childcare experience, have a safe driving record, pass a criminal record scan dating back seven years, pass an additional background check going back to age 18, be fingerprinted, and have their name checked to ensure they are not listed on a child abuse registry. Although the process is rigorous, it is necessary. Safety is how ridesharing services for kids compete with ride-share giants like Uber and Lyft. In fact, kid-friendly ride share apps are proven to have safer drivers than companies that do not transport kids.

However, finding safe drivers is just the tip of the iceberg. Gaining parents' trust is an even bigger challenge. Some companies are using technology that detects behaviors like speed, whether drivers are using their phones, and abrupt breaking. Still others utilize live dashboard cameras and GPS tracking so that parents can watch their children during rides and monitor their location. Kango even offers to arrange a meet-and-greet between parents and drivers before a child begins using the ride-share service.

While kid ride-sharing companies are taking steps to address these immediate challenges, they may have overlooked one additional obstacle: it could be difficult for kid ride-sharing companies to claim that their drivers are independent contractors, especially in California. Besides transporting passengers, drivers at some companies are required to get out of their vehicles to make sure children get to the next adult safely. In addition, many drivers are required to have safety equipment installed on their personal car. Finally, many of the rides are pre-scheduled and recurring, as kids need to be transported to and from school and extracurricular activities several times during the need to be transported to and from school and extracurricular activities several times during the week. This creates an issue of the drivers being told when and for how long they will be working, which could lead an enterprising plaintiffs' attorney or overeager government investigator to make a claim that these drivers are employees and not contractors. It is still too early to see how these issues will play out. However, if *Dynamex* is any indication into the future, these ride share start-ups may be unknowingly venturing into dangerous employment law territory.