

Questions to Ask a Home Care Provider

Entrusting the care of a loved one to someone else can be a difficult but necessary step. While there are many excellent home care providers, not every provider will be the right fit for you, your loved one, or your situation. The following is not meant to cover every question you should ask, it's merely a sample of questions to consider and ask when you are looking for a home care provider. There are a number of online resources about what other questions you might consider. You could do an online search using 'what questions to ask home care providers' for more ideas.

A Note on Agency vs. Independent Home Care Providers

There are qualified home care providers who work for an agency and undergo screening, follow the agency's policies and procedures, and are covered by the agency's insurance. There are also qualified providers who work independently or as part of a smaller collective. Both models have advantages and disadvantages. The following questions may help you decide which type of home care provider best meets your needs.

Safety

- **What safety precautions are in place to reduce the risk of infection?**
Examples could include the use of personal protective equipment (PPE), such as gloves and masks, as well as cleaning and sanitizing practices.
- **What screening do you or your staff members undergo?**
This could include a criminal record check with a vulnerable sector screening, reference checks, and drug screening. A follow-up question to ask is: *How often is this screening completed?* Is it done annually, or only once?
- **What training do staff members receive?**
Do they receive ongoing training? Have they received specialized training in Alzheimer's care, personal care, palliative or end-of-life care, safe caregiving practices, or transfers? Are they certified in standard first aid and CPR?
- **What type of insurance do you carry?**
Do you have liability insurance? If caregivers are driving you or your loved one to appointments, do they have the appropriate vehicle insurance coverage to do so?

Responsive Office Team and Support

- **Can my family receive a consistent schedule with the same caregiver?**
If so, are there any waiting periods?

- **Is office support available 24/7?**
- **How easy is it to make changes to the care schedule once we become clients?**
- **What are the minimum weekly hours of care?**
- **What is the arrival window for scheduled visits?**
For example, if care is scheduled for 2:00 p.m., could the caregiver arrive up to 30 minutes early or late?
- **What is your cancellation policy?**
- **What should I do if the caregiver does not arrive at the scheduled time?**

Quality of Care

- **How do you match caregivers with clients?**
What steps do you take to help ensure compatibility and consistency? What happens if we feel the match is not a good fit?
- **How often do you check in with clients and monitor changes in their care needs or condition?**
What is covered during these check-ins or visits?
- **Is care supervised by a licensed nurse?**
- **How do caregivers communicate with families?**
Do you provide updates by email, text message, a communication book kept in the home, or another method?
- **What happens if my family member's condition worsens?**
Can the level of care be increased as needed?
- **Can you provide specialized care for my family member's specific condition?**
- **If I am not satisfied with the care my family member is receiving, what is the process for addressing my concerns?**

Costs and Administrative Questions

- **What are the costs of care, and under what circumstances would those costs increase?**
- **How do I pay for care?**
- **Can you provide references from current or previous clients?**
- **Are your caregivers employees of the agency or independent contractors?**