

Question to Ask When Choosing an In-Home Care Provider

When family caregivers realize that they need help caring for a senior parent or loved one, choosing the right care can be difficult. Home care service agencies vary in experience, ability, and scope of care. Services can range from medical care to help with daily household chores. If you're considering home care services, ask these questions to choose the best.

Qualifications:

Can you provide references?

Ask for a list of doctors, hospital discharge planners or other professionals who have experience with the agency. Ask doctors, family and friends for agency recommendations.

How long has your agency been in business?

Can you send me information about your services and fees?

In addition to helping you compare services and fees, this can help get a sense of the quality and professionalism of an agency. The quality of the information materials you receive may indicate the attention an in-home care provider gives to all aspects of operations.

Quality of Care:

How do you hire and train caregivers?

Look for an agency that balances experience and training with a person's natural ability to care for others. The caregivers should also be thoroughly screened—including interviews, criminal background checks, reference checks, and motor vehicle records.

Are your caregivers bonded and insured?

Make sure the agency has coverage to protect your loved one and your family. The provider should carry professional and general liability insurance, bond its employees and cover employees with workers' compensation insurance.

How closely does your agency supervise and evaluate the quality of home care?

Make sure that the agency makes regular visits to ensure quality care.

Costs:

How does your agency handle expenses and billing?

Get written explanations of services, fees, and costs associated with care. Find out what arrangements may be in place for insurance plans.

Understanding Services:

Will your agency provide me or my loved one with the services of nurses or social workers?

Services of RNs and Social Workers add invaluable professional oversight.

What if I am not satisfied with the caregiver assigned to me or my loved one?

Reputable in-home care providers will assign a new caregiver when a match does not work out.

Are there any limits on the types of tasks performed? If so, what are the limits?

When will service be provided? Find out if care is available round-the-clock, if necessary.

What procedures are in place for emergencies?

Find out how the agency or aides deliver services in the event of a power failure or natural disaster. Find out if the agency provides 24-hour on-call telephone services in the event of an emergency.

What does the process of starting services look like should I choose your agency? Will I receive a written care plan?

Prior to starting services, a reputable agency should send a nurse or other professional to the home for an in-depth assessment of the client's needs and an evaluation of the home environment from a safety perspective. The result of this meeting is a detailed Client Care Plan kept at the client's home that caregivers use to understand the level of personal care and housekeeping tasks your loved one requires. This plan is then updated as the client's care needs change.



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