Questions to Ask Care Providers

Starts with Medicare's official Home Health Agency Checklist, then adds questions for non-medical home care. Ask every provider the same questions.

AGENCY / PROVIDER NAME	CONTACT PERSON
PHONE	AFTER-HOURS PHONE
EMAIL / WEBSITE	LICENSE OR CERTIFICATION #
DATE OF CALL / INTERVIEW	HOURLY RATE QUOTED

Medicare Home Health Agency Checklist (answer Yes / No)

Source: Medicare

- ☐ Medicare certified?
- ☐ Medicaid certified (if your loved one has both Medicare and Medicaid)?
- ☐ Offers the specific health care services needed, like skilled nursing or physical therapy?
- ☐ Meets special needs, like language or cultural preferences?
- ☐ Offers the personal care needed, like help bathing, dressing and using the bathroom?
- ☐ Offers support services needed, or can help arrange others, like meal delivery?
- ☐ Has staff who can give the type and hours of care the doctor ordered, and start when needed?
- ☐ Is recommended by the hospital discharge planner, doctor or social worker?
- ☐ Has staff available at night and on weekends for emergencies?
- ☐ Explained what insurance covers and what you must pay out of pocket?
- ☐ Has letters from satisfied patients, family members and doctors?

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» Look up the agency's star ratings and patient survey results on Medicare's Care Compare.

» Non-medical home care agencies aren't on Care Compare; use the questions below for them.

Background & Credentials

- ☐ Are you licensed or certified in Ohio? Can I see proof?
- ☐ Are caregivers employees or contractors? Are they bonded and insured?
- ☐ Do you do background checks and drug screening?
- ☐ How long have you served families in this area?

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» Verify any license with the Ohio Department of Health or relevant board.

» Ask for two family references and call them.

Care Capabilities

- [ ] Can you handle dementia, mobility, diabetes or other specific needs?
- [ ] What tasks can and can't your caregivers do (medications, bathing, driving)?
- [ ] Who supervises caregivers, and how often do they visit?

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» Describe a hard day for your loved one and ask how they'd handle it.

» Ask what dementia training caregivers receive.

Scheduling & Reliability

- [ ] What is the minimum number of hours per visit or week?
- [ ] Will we have the same caregiver each time?
- [ ] What happens if a caregiver is sick or doesn't show up?

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» Ask: 'How often do you miss a shift, and how do you notify families?'

» Ask how they track arrival and departure times.

Communication

- [ ] How will you update us: notes, app, calls?
- [ ] Who do we call with concerns, day or night?
- [ ] How do you handle complaints or caregiver changes?

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» Ask to see a sample visit note.

» Agree on a regular check-in time with the care supervisor.

Costs & Billing

- [ ] What is the hourly rate? Is it different on nights, weekends or holidays?
- [ ] Do you accept long-term care insurance, VA or Medicaid waiver?
- [ ] Is there a deposit, contract length or cancellation fee?

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» Get all rates and fees in writing.

» Ask if they'll help file long-term care insurance claims.

Trial & Transition

- [ ] Can we start with a trial period?
- [ ] Will someone introduce the caregiver before the first shift?
- [ ] How do we reduce, increase or end services?

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» Plan to be present for the first few visits.

» Set a two-week check-in to decide if it's working.

Red flags

! No written service agreement
! Won't confirm background checks
! Cash-only or pressure for long contracts

Official sources

Medicare: Home Health Agency Checklist
https://www.medicare.gov/care-compare/en/assets/resources/home-health/Home_Health_Agency_Checklist_2.pdf
Medicare Care Compare (home health)
https://www.medicare.gov/care-compare/

Notes