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# Questions to Ask Before Hiring a Home Care Agency



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10 essential questions every family should ask—and how to interpret the answers.

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# Introduction

Choosing a home care agency is one of the most important decisions a family makes. You're not just selecting a company—you're choosing who will enter your home, care for your loved one, and represent your values every day.

This guide helps families:

- Identify key questions to ask before signing any contract.
- Understand what good agencies do differently.
- Spot red flags before problems begin.
- Keep notes and score agencies objectively.

**Remember:** A confident agency will welcome your questions.

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# Question 1: Are You Licensed and Accredited?

**Why It Matters:** Licensing ensures state oversight and adherence to safety regulations. Accreditation adds voluntary quality assurance.

- **Good Answers:** Licensed by state health department; accredited by JCAHO or CHAP.
- **Red Flags:** "We're working on it," or no proof available.
- **Follow-up:** Ask to see their current license certificate and expiration date.
- **Verification:** Check your state's Department of Health database.

# Question 2: How Do You Screen and Train Caregivers?

**Why It Matters:** A background-checked, well-trained caregiver ensures safety and competence.

- **Good Answers:** National background check, reference verification, initial + annual training.
- **Red Flags:** No consistent training or vague hiring standards.
- **Follow-up:** Request training topics list and ongoing education policy.
- **Verification:** Ask for proof of staff background policy.

# Question 3: How Are Care Plans Developed and Updated?

**Why It Matters:** Personalized plans reduce risk and ensure needs are met.

- **Good Answers:** RN develops care plan; reviewed every 60–90 days.
- **Red Flags:** One-size-fits-all templates or no regular review.
- **Follow-up:** Ask who writes and reviews care plans.
- **Verification:** Request a sample (redacted) plan.

# Question 4: How Do You Handle Missed Visits or No-Shows?

**Why It Matters:** Missed shifts are among the top complaints in home care.

- **Good Answers:** 24/7 scheduling team, replacement within 2 hours, proactive alerts.
- **Red Flags:** "We'll try our best."
- **Follow-up:** Ask if families are notified when staff are late.
- **Verification:** Request policy documentation.

# Question 5: Who Supervises Caregivers in the Field?

**Why It Matters:** Regular supervision ensures accountability and ongoing feedback.

- **Good Answers:** Supervising nurse visits monthly; feedback loop with family.
- **Red Flags:** No routine supervision or unannounced checks.
- **Follow-up:** Ask how you can contact the supervisor directly.
- **Verification:** Ask to see a sample supervision checklist.

# Question 6: How Do You Match Caregivers With Clients?

**Why It Matters:** Compatibility improves trust and consistency.

- **Good Answers:** Based on skills, personality, and client preferences.
- **Red Flags:** "We send whoever is available."
- **Follow-up:** Ask if you can request caregiver changes.
- **Verification:** Ask for examples of successful matches.

# Question 7: How Are Emergencies Handled After Hours?

**Why It Matters:** Care needs don't end at 5 p.m.

- **Good Answers:** On-call nurse or dispatcher 24/7, emergency response plan.
- **Red Flags:** Voicemail-only after hours.
- **Follow-up:** Ask for the after-hours protocol.
- **Verification:** Call their number after hours to test response.

# Question 8: What Are Your Rates, Billing Methods, and Cancellation Policies?

**Why It Matters:** Transparency prevents surprise charges.

- **Good Answers:** Written fee schedule, hourly rates, notice requirements, all in contract.
- **Red Flags:** Unclear billing, verbal-only agreements.
- **Follow-up:** Ask if overtime or holidays cost extra.
- **Verification:** Review sample invoices.

# Question 9: How Do You Handle Complaints and Feedback?

**Why It Matters:** Responsive agencies improve quickly and maintain trust.

- **Good Answers:** Written grievance procedure, 24-hour acknowledgment, tracked resolution.
- **Red Flags:** Defensive or dismissive responses.
- **Follow-up:** Ask how complaints are logged.
- **Verification:** Request a copy of their complaint policy.

# Question 10: Can You Provide Client References?

**Why It Matters:** Testimonials offer real-world insight.

- **Good Answers:** 2–3 families (with consent) willing to speak; reviews available online.
- **Red Flags:** Refusal or excuses citing "privacy."
- **Follow-up:** Ask to speak with a family similar to yours.
- **Verification:** Check state complaint database for filed grievances.

# Interview Scorecard

Criteria	Excellent (3)	Adequate (2)	Poor (1)	Score
Licensing & Accreditation				
Staff Screening & Training				
Care Plan Quality				
Reliability & No-Show Response				
Supervision Practices				
Caregiver Compatibility				
Emergency Support				
Transparency in Billing				
Complaint Response				
Client References				

**Total Score: \_\_\_\_ / 30**

Rating: Excellent (26–30) | Good (21–25) | Needs Review (15–20) | Avoid (<15)



# Red Flags Summary

## Common Warning Signs:

- Vague or evasive answers.
- No written materials or policies.
- Frequent staff turnover.
- Pressure to sign immediately.
- No supervisor or nurse oversight.
- Refusal to share references

*If it feels uncomfortable now, it will feel worse later.*



# Next Steps Checklist

## Verify Credentials

Confirm state license + insurance coverage. Ask for accreditation proof (JCAHO / CHAP)

Check your state's Health Dept license lookup.

## Speak to Real Families

Request 2-3 references with similar needs. Listen for honesty and specific examples.

Cross-check with online reviews.

## Review the Care Plan

Ask to see a sample plan showing tasks, goals, and update frequency.

Ensure it's individualized, not a template.

## Confirm Backup Coverage

Ask what happens if a caregiver no-shows. Expect a written policy or replacement timeframe.

Reliable agencies respond within 2 hours.

## Understand Billing

Request a written rate sheet and contract. Clarify extra fees, minimum hours, and notice periods.

Avoid verbal-only agreements.

## Test After-Hours Support

Call after business hours to see who answers.

Responsiveness reveals real-world reliability.

## Evaluate Communication

Notice tone and follow-up speed during the process.

Good agencies welcome questions and respond within 24 hours.

## Compare Scorecards

Add up scores from each agency (out of 30). Trust numbers and instincts — both matter.

## Involve Your Family

Share findings, align on expectations, and assign a primary contact.

Unified decisions prevent future confusion.

## Choose with Confidence

If any policy feels unclear, pause before signing. Pick the agency that shows empathy, transparency, and accountability.