

Guide to Selecting a Provider

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This guide is intended to provide you with questions that may be helpful in selecting a provider of services to support your family member. Each section is organized to include how the provider operates. It also includes questions regarding safety, staffing, communications and financial issues.

These are only guidelines. You may have other questions that may be more relevant to your own needs. You should not feel reluctant to ask any questions as each provider is more than willing to help you decide on how your family member can best be served.

An alternative to a traditional provider agency is to hire your own staff. Please contact your supports coordinator for further information and refer to the document on hiring your own staff.

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I. GENERAL AGENCY QUESTIONS

A. MANAGEMENT

1. Who started the agency?
Why was the agency started?
2. Are there brochures and/or any other printed material about the agency available? Yes No
3. Do you have a website? Yes No
4. How long has the agency been in business?
5. Where does the funding come from?
6. For licensed services – what was the status of your most recent licensing?
7. How many incidents have been reported in the last 12 months for each program you operate?
8. Can you have 3 people whose family members are currently receiving services call me? Yes No
9. How do you monitor both the individual's and family's satisfaction with the agency?
10. Do you have any agency policies that limit choice of activities? Yes No
11. What are your admission and discharge policies for individuals?
12. How do you assure child abuse/criminal records are cleared on an ongoing basis?
13. What is the process for discharging staff?
14. For what reasons can a staff person be discharged?
15. How many individuals left the program last year and for what reasons?

B. OPERATIONS

1. How do you help people in making choices?
2. How do you encourage choice?
3. What community activities do individuals have an opportunity to attend?
4. How do you foster skill development and movement towards independence?
5. How do you assure the individual service plan is being implemented?
6. How do you provide administrative support to staff?
7. Do you employ staff from other countries? Yes No If so, how do you address language issues, cultural differences, religious preferences, etc.?
8. What constitutes an emergency when I must be contacted?
9. Will I have access to my individual's health information?
10. Are there medical IDs? Yes No
11. Who dispenses medication?
12. How do you ensure it is given properly?
13. What is the policy regarding medication and its administration?
14. What back up systems are in place for medical emergencies?
15. What would be my role if I do not agree with medical recommendations?

C. SAFETY

1. Are there driver safety requirements? Yes No
2. Does your van have a number on it to report unsafe driving? Yes No
3. Do you have a seat belt policy? Yes No
If so, what do you do if someone refuses to wear a seatbelt?

4. Are current driver's licenses a condition for employment? Yes No
5. What crimes would prohibit employment at your agency?
6. What is your screening process for hiring staff?

D. STAFFING

1. Can I participate in the hiring, firing or dismissal of staff? Yes No
2. What is the required training for staff? (i.e., medical, abuse prevention, fire safety, respect, agency philosophy and goals, telephone etiquette, sensitivity, group dynamics, communication skills, relationships and sexuality)
3. How do you handle conflicts between individuals receiving your services and staff?
4. Do you have a drug testing policy for staff and how is it implemented? Yes No
5. What is included in your staff training regarding communication with families?
6. What are your educational requirements for direct care staff?
7. Can your staff transport my family member? Yes No
8. What are the driver safety requirements?
9. Are there any restrictions regarding staff driving my family member? Yes No
10. Does staff carry cell phones in case of emergency when they are out in the community?
 Yes No
If so, are the staff's cell phone numbers available to families in case of emergency? Yes No
11. What are the job responsibilities of direct care staff?
12. How do you ensure that job duties are completed?
13. What happens if an individual does not want a particular staff to care for them?
14. If a staff person calls off, what do you do to cover the shift?

15. How many staff work with the individuals?
16. What is longest length of service for a direct service staff?
17. What is your dress code for staff?
18. Does your staff have nutritional education? Yes No
19. What is the staff turnover rate for direct service staff?

For administrative staff?

20. What is the average length of employment?
21. What advancement opportunities are available to your staff?
22. Is there same gender staff available to work with an individual? Yes No
23. Does your staff switch from one location to another? Yes No
24. What is the continuous education program for nurses?

E. COMMUNICATIONS

1. How do you assure communication with the team? (i.e., between residential and day providers, Core team and residential, etc)
2. What is your policy regarding communication with families?
3. How do you support people with communication issues (nonverbal, sign, augmentative communication)?
4. How do you assure that my family member can communicate with the staff and vice versa?
5. What is the communication process between family and provider regarding health issues?

F. FINANCIAL

1. What is the average rate of pay for direct care staff?

II. RESIDENTIAL (ICF/MR, COMMUNITY HOMES FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH MR, SEMI-INDEPENDENT)

A. OPERATIONS

1. Can I see your policy on Relationships and Sexuality? Yes No
2. Do male staff work with female individuals doing personal care/hygiene? Yes No
3. Are staff available to take individuals home for visits to the individual's family? Yes No
4. How are direct care staff supervised?

How often is the supervision?

5. Do I need to give any notice before visiting? Yes No If so, to whom?
6. Do you provide transportation to day programs? Yes No
7. How does your agency respond to medical emergencies/behavioral issues?
8. What recreational and social activities do people participate in?

What happens when people choose not to participate?

9. What are your relationships with your neighbors?
10. How do you foster skill development and movement towards independence?
11. How many people moved to less supervised settings, or situations with fewer supports?
12. Does everybody have their own bedroom? Yes No If not, how are roommates selected?
13. How do you assure consistency between residential and day programs?
14. Who is responsible for ensuring cleanliness?

15. Can I see several different homes? Yes No
16. Can I see copies of your menus? Yes No
17. How often do you eat out?

Where do you go?

18. Who does the laundry?
19. How often is laundry done?
20. Choice is good but how do you ensure that warm clothes are worn in winter and lighter clothes in summer?
21. What would be my role if I do not agree with medical recommendations?
22. What expectations do you have health-wise when an individual is home visiting their family?
23. Will I have access to my individual's health information? Yes No

B. SAFETY

1. Are entrance doors locked? Yes No
2. How do you prevent someone from leaving the site?
3. What are your security measures?
4. How do you ensure the safety of those served by the agency?
5. Are house/apt. keys available for those who are capable? Yes No
6. How do you assure the safety of cash on hand?
7. What happens if stealing occurs?

How do you prevent stealing of money or clothes?

C. STAFFING

1. Is your staff expected to appear and act in a professional manner? Yes No
2. Does your staff stay home when someone is sick? Yes No
3. Do you have a nurse? Yes No What are the nursing qualifications?

How often is a nurse on-site?

4. Is there a continuous education program for nurses? Yes No

D. COMMUNICATION

1. Who is my main contact and what are the phone numbers?
2. Who are back up personnel and what are their phone numbers?
3. How do you let me know how my family member is doing?
4. What plans do you have for families to reach appropriate personnel in the event of an emergency outside office hours?
5. What do I do if no one is there for a planned pick up or drop off of my family member?

E. FINANCIAL

1. What is your rate? What does the rate include?
2. Do you serve as representative payee? Yes No

III. DAY PROGRAMS (OLDER ADULT DAY SERVICES, PRE-VOCATIONAL, COMMUNITY HABILITATION)

A. OPERATIONS

1. What is your policy on visits by family?
2. Are snacks provided? Yes No Is a meal provided? Yes No
3. How do you ensure consistency between home and day programs?
4. How many people have moved to less supervised settings or situations with fewer supports?
Who is responsible for making this recommendation and following up?
5. How do you respond to life changes such as complications of aging or medical issues?
6. What kind of transportation is available?
7. Who is responsible for transportation?
8. Do you have a yearly schedule available? Yes No
9. What is your attendance policy?
10. What opportunities are available for varied task assignments?

B. SAFETY

1. Is it a clean, safe environment? Yes No
2. How do you prevent theft of clothes or money?

C. STAFFING

1. How are your program directors organized-by residential provider or by the programs offered in the day program?
2. Is staff available to help with personal care/hygiene? Yes No
3. Is there a nurse on-site? Yes No How often is the nurse on-site?
4. What are the nursing qualifications?
5. Is there a continuous education program for nurses? Yes No

D. COMMUNICATION

1. How do you allow for individualized environmental adaptations (i.e., communication devices, headsets, etc.)?

E. FINANCIAL

1. Is there a retirement program and what is it? Yes No
2. What is your rate? What does it include?

IV. COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT

A. OPERATIONS

1. How do you determine what type of job my family member will be successful at?
2. How many placements have you made in the past year?
3. What types of job opportunities are available?
4. Are you connected with any specific community organizations? Yes No
5. What is the average length of employment?
6. What is the job satisfaction of the individuals you place?
7. What is the employer satisfaction with your agency's services?
8. How long does it take to find a job?
9. What is the average travel time to a job?

B. STAFFING

1. Is there one staff assigned to my family member? Yes No

C. FINANCIAL

1. What is the average hourly salary that an individual earns?
2. What happens if my family member loses his job?
3. What does your agency charge for this service? What does that rate include?

V. LIFESHARING

A. OPERATIONS

1. How do you find families willing to provide Lifesharing?
2. What training do these families receive?
3. What are the supports in emergency situations?
4. How is the final decision about choosing a Lifesharing Provider Family made?
5. How do you handle respite?
6. On average, how long do Lifesharing Provider Families continue to share their lives as part of Lifesharing?
7. Who handles medical coordination for the individual?

B. SAFETY

1. What is the screening process for a Lifesharing Provider Family?
2. What background checks are obtained?

C. STAFFING

1. How often is staff in contact with the Lifesharing Provider Family?

D. COMMUNICATION

1. What are the expectations of the Lifesharing Provider Family?
2. What involvement does the family have in getting to know a potential Lifesharing Provider Family?

3. What is the process for introducing a potential Lifesharing Provider Family to the individual and their family?
4. Who do I talk with about problems, concerns and general updates?
5. What happens when the individual chooses to attend a different church from the Lifesharing Provider Family?
6. What happens if the Lifesharing relationship has problems?

E. FINANCIAL

1. What is the average cost for an individual to live with a Lifesharing family?
2. What does that rate include?

VI. HOME BASED- HOME AND COMMUNITY HABILITATION/RESPITE

A. STAFFING

1. Can I participate in staff selection and termination? Yes No
2. Do you have a pool of respite providers available? Yes No
3. What happens if a scheduled staff person does not show up?
4. What are the limitations for your staff while working with my family member?
5. How much notice do you need to provide staff in an emergency?

B. FINANCIAL

1. Do you subcontract for respite services? Yes No
2. If the answer to #1 is yes, what is your administrative cost?
3. What is your rate? What does that rate include?