

Provider Interview Checklist

Essential Questions to Ask Before Choosing Any Senior Care Provider

RightCareFinder.com | Free Nurse-Guided Senior Care

Use this checklist when interviewing home health agencies, assisted living facilities, memory care communities, skilled nursing facilities, or private caregivers. These are the questions a nurse would ask. Don't sign anything until you've completed this checklist.

SECTION 1: STAFFING & QUALIFICATIONS

- What is your staff-to-resident ratio during the day? At night? On weekends?
- Are your caregivers licensed, certified, or trained? What credentials do they hold?
- Do you perform criminal background checks on all staff? How thorough are they?
- What is your average staff turnover rate? How long has your current staff been here?
- Is there a registered nurse on-site or on-call 24 hours a day?
- What ongoing training do staff receive? How often? Specifically for dementia care?
- Who supervises the caregivers? How is care quality monitored?

NURSE TIP: Ask for specific numbers, not vague answers. "We always have enough staff" is not an answer. A ratio of 1 caregiver to 8-10 residents during the day is good. If the night ratio exceeds 1:20, your loved one may wait 30+ minutes for help.

SECTION 2: CARE SERVICES & MEDICAL SUPPORT

- What specific services are included in the base monthly rate?
- What services cost extra? What are the additional charges?
- How do you handle medications? Who administers them — a nurse or an aide?
- How do you handle medical emergencies after hours? What is the protocol?
- How do you monitor changes in a resident's condition? Who is notified?
- What happens when my loved one's care needs increase over time?
- Can you handle wound care, diabetic management, catheter care, or G-tube feeding?

NURSE TIP: Always ask "What would happen at 2am if my parent fell/had chest pain/became confused?" The answer reveals the real quality of emergency response — not the brochure version.

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SECTION 3: SAFETY & ENVIRONMENT

- Can I visit unannounced at any time, including evenings and weekends?
- What fall prevention measures are in place?
- Are hallways clear, bathrooms safe, and call lights within reach?
- For memory care: How is the facility secured to prevent wandering?
- What is the facility's fire safety and emergency evacuation plan?
- Can I see the most recent state inspection report? Were there violations?
- How do you handle allegations of abuse, neglect, or theft?

NURSE TIP: Visit at 6pm on a random weekday — not during a scheduled tour. If the hallway smells like urine and call lights are ringing with no staff in sight, the 5-star rating doesn't matter. Trust your gut.

SECTION 4: COMMUNICATION & FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

- How do you communicate with families about changes in condition?
- How often are care plan meetings held? Can family attend?
- Who is my main point of contact if I have concerns?
- How are medication changes communicated to the family?
- Will you notify me immediately if my loved one falls, is injured, or goes to the ER?
- Can I speak directly with the nurse or doctor caring for my loved one?

SECTION 5: COST, CONTRACT & FINANCIAL PROTECTION

- What is the total monthly cost including all care surcharges?
- What triggers a rate increase? How often are care levels reassessed?
- How much have rates increased over the past 3 years?
- What insurance do you accept? Medicare? Medicaid? VA? Long-term care insurance?
- What is the move-in fee or deposit? Is any of it refundable?
- What is your discharge policy? What fees apply if we leave early?
- Do you accept Medicaid if my loved one's funds run out?
- What happens financially if my loved one passes away mid-month?

NURSE TIP: Ask 'What would the TOTAL cost be for someone with my parent's specific needs?' The advertised rate is almost never the final price. Get the all-in number before signing anything.

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SECTION 6: DAILY LIFE & QUALITY

- What does a typical day look like for residents?
- What activities and social programs are offered?
- Can I see a sample menu? Can we eat a meal during the tour?
- How are dietary restrictions handled (diabetic, low sodium, pureed, allergies)?
- Can my loved one bring personal furniture, photos, and belongings?
- Are pets allowed?
- What transportation is provided for medical appointments?
- Are there outdoor spaces residents can access safely?

SECTION 7: RED FLAGS TO WATCH FOR

If you notice any of these during your visit, consider it a serious warning sign:

- ! Strong persistent odor of urine or heavy air freshener masking smells
- ! Residents sitting alone, unattended, or appearing unkempt
- ! Staff ignoring call lights or taking excessive time to respond
- ! Vague or defensive answers to your questions
- ! Pressure to sign a contract immediately or 'before this room is taken'
- ! Resistance to unannounced family visits
- ! Staff unable to explain their fall prevention or emergency protocols
- ! Dirty common areas, bathrooms, or dining spaces
- ! No clear answer about what happens when care needs increase
- ! Unwillingness to show you the state inspection report

YOUR NOTES

Need Help Finding the Right Provider?

Get free, nurse-guided help at RightCareFinder.com/contact