Choosing a Home Care Agency

Use this to choose an agency for help with daily tasks at home: decide what you need, find agencies, compare up to three side by side, and check before you sign.

Home care (aides who help with bathing, meals, housekeeping and company) is different from Medicare home health (short nursing or therapy visits a doctor orders). Medicare doesn't pay for ongoing home care; families usually pay, sometimes with help from long-term care insurance, Medicaid or VA benefits.

Step 1: Know what you're asking for

Help needed with: _____

Hours a day: _____ **Days a week:** _____ **Start date:** _____

Who will pay: _____

Step 2: Find agencies

- ☐ Check whether your state licenses home care agencies, and look up each one you're considering.
- ☐ Ask the Area Agency on Aging (eldercare.acl.gov) for agencies in your area.
- ☐ Ask friends, the doctor's office and local senior centers who they trust.
- ☐ If long-term care insurance or Medicaid will pay, ask which agencies they work with.

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Step 3: Compare up to three agencies

Call each one with the same questions. Write short answers so you can compare.

	Agency A	Agency B	Agency C
Name and phone			
Licensed? Insured and bonded?			
Aides are employees (not contractors)?			
Background checks and training			
Minimum hours per visit			
Hourly rate, nights and weekends			
Can start by			
Same aide each time?			
Backup if the aide is sick			
Supervisor visits, how often			
Free in-home assessment?			
Contract: notice to cancel			
How we felt about the call			

Step 4: Before you sign

- ☐ Ask for references from families they've served, and call two.
- ☐ Read the service agreement: rates, minimums, how to cancel, and what happens if you hire an aide directly.
- ☐ Schedule the in-home assessment (checklist 5).
- ☐ Meet the aide before the first shift, with your parent there.
- ☐ Agree on how the agency will tell you about problems, and who your contact is.

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Our choice and why

Your parent leads, when they can. Most decisions are theirs to make, and health questions belong with their doctor. This checklist helps your family organize and take the next step together.

The Family Caregiver Quick-Start: 1. Can No Longer Live Alone: What to Do First · 2. Signs a Parent Needs More Help · 3. Preparing for a Family Care Meeting · 4. Choosing a Home Care Agency · 5. Preparing for a Home Care Assessment · 6. What to Bring to a Medical Appointment · 7. Organizing a Parent's Important Information. All at AgingAtHomeSupport.com/caregiver-quick-start/

For the full list of questions with answer pages, the Questions for a Home Care Agency printable is at AgingAtHomeSupport.com/book/tools/questions-for-a-home-care-agency/

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