

Selecting an agency to provide services is an important decision. Here are suggested questions to guide you in your search and help you and your family make decisions.

1. What is the provider's mission? Does it encompass the services and the intent you are seeking?
2. Is the provider certified, accredited or licensed and by whom? How does the provider describe the standards of service the organization has adopted?
3. How does the agency make sure people are treated with respect?
4. Can friends and family visit anytime? How much notice do family and friends have to give before a visit?
5. How does the agency actively assist people to make choices?
6. Does the agency encourage and support people to be active with self-advocacy groups? How?
7. How much say-so do people receiving services have in deciding and selecting the staff that works with them?
8. How much say-so does the person receiving services have in deciding where he/she lives and with whom she/he lives?
9. Do people have keys to their own home or apartment?
10. How does the agency provide for privacy for the person?
11. Can you supply me with a list of families who receive services from you so I can discuss your services with them?
12. How many people with developmental disabilities and family members are on the board of directors?
13. Does the agency have any written materials about the agency we can take with us?
14. How long has the agency been in business?
15. Does the agency have a parent organization? What role does it play?
16. How can I obtain a copy of the most recent licensing survey?
17. Is the agency accredited by any accrediting bodies?
18. What kind of safety measures does the provider have to protect and assure treatment?
19. Is the provider connected to other programs that your family member or friend might need such as day support or work programs? How are they connected?
20. What and how does the provider routinely report to families? How often?
21. How does the agency handle a person's finances?

22. Ask the agency to describe the screening process it uses to hire staff.
23. What training does the agency offer staff?
24. How is direct service staff supervised?
25. What is the turnover rate for direct service staff? For administrative staff?
26. What mechanism is used in supervision, evaluation and dismissal of staff?
27. How can families and consumers reach different staff at all levels in an emergency outside office hours?
28. What backup systems are in place for medical or behavioral emergencies?
29. What are the policies regarding medication and its administration?
30. How are services individualized to meet individual needs?
31. How many people have been discharged from the program in the last year?
32. What procedure is used to discharge an individual?
33. Why did the people discharged from the program leave?
34. How many people discharged from the program moved to less supervised settings, or situations with fewer supports?
35. How does the agency respond to life changes such as marriage, retirement, shift work, complications of aging, medical issues and so on?
36. What recreational and social activities do people participate in? How individualized, available, accessible and consistent are they? How often do people participate in these activities? What happens when individuals choose not to participate?
37. What kind of transportation is available during the week? On weekends?
38. Does the agency have good relationships with neighbors and/or neighborhood associations where people live? How are relationships nurtured and maintained?
39. How does the agency help people learn to be a part of their community?

*Adapted from Service Coordination, The Arc of Frederick County, Inc.; Signs of Quality by People On The Go of Maryland; and The Arc of Maryland.*