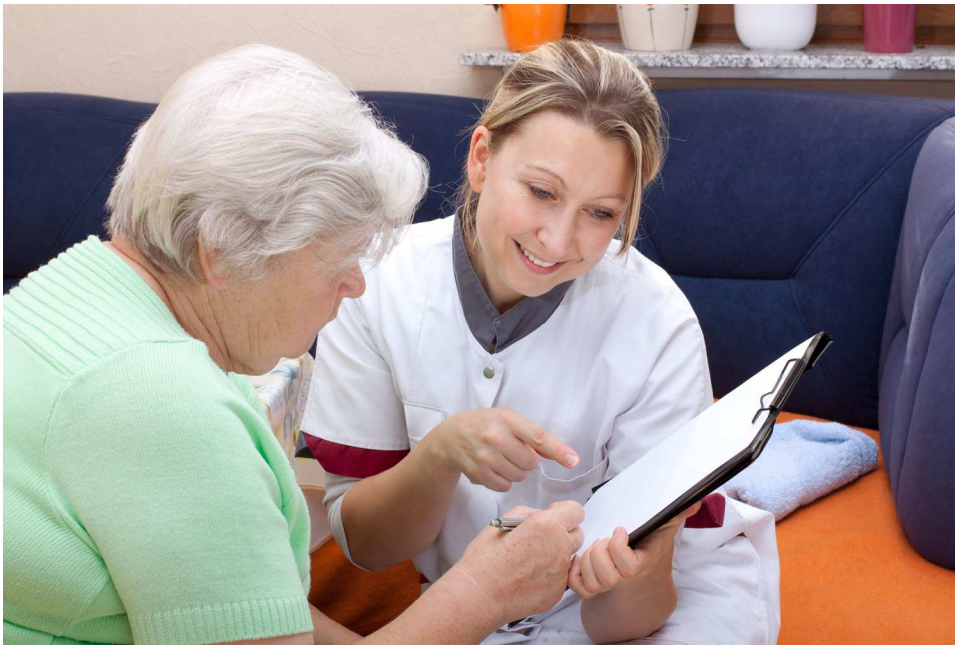


# The 7 crucial questions to ask when choosing an in-home caregiver



*Asking these seven questions before you hire an in-home caregiver will help you and your loved one feel safe and comfortable*



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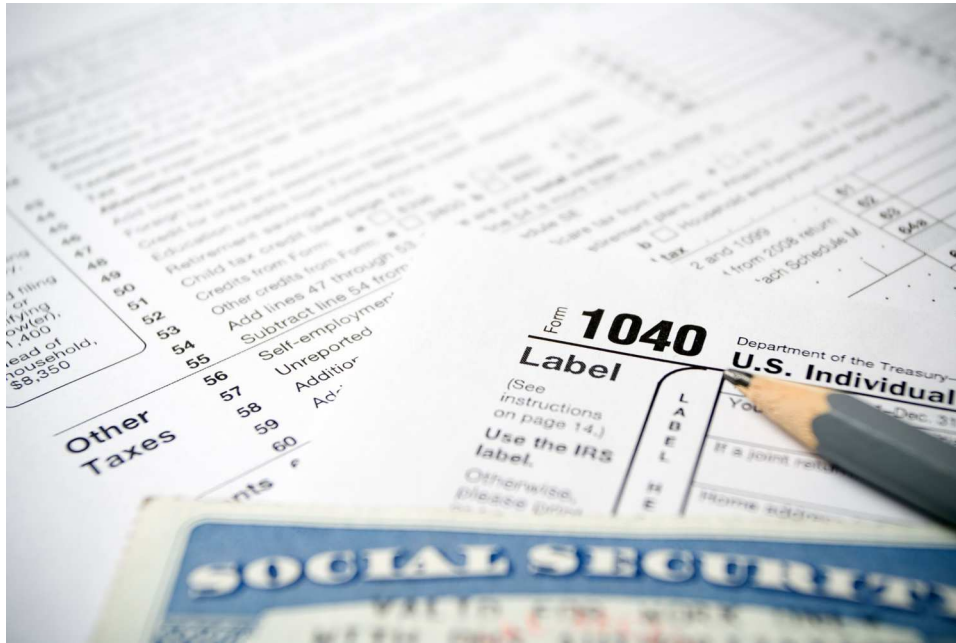
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# Question 1

Independent caregiver, registry, or agency?



There are three main types of home care providers: **independent caregivers**, **registries**, and **agencies**. It is extremely important to understand the differences between them, and to ensure that the provider you select best meets your needs.

Independent caregivers are individuals who you find and hire directly without a middleman. Registries manage lists of independent caregivers, and upon request can put a client in contact with them. A client who hires a caregiver on their own or from a registry, therefore, is actually taking them on as an employee.



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These two options typically come at a lower cost than agencies, but they add complexities and responsibilities. For example, you will need to be aware of any tax, Social Security, and worker's compensation requirements, because you will be taking on the role of an employer.



While the flexibility of hiring an independent contractor may be appealing to some, the hidden cost is the lack of a safety net.

Home Care Agencies will take care of the employer responsibilities and tax requirements, insurance (workers comp and bonding), ensure that caregiver certifications are met, and perform background screening on caregivers. Furthermore, an agency will provide for a substitute caregiver should your primary one be sick or unavailable. While the flexibility of hiring an independent contractor may be appealing to some, the hidden cost is the lack of a safety net.

Comfort Home Care is a Home Care Agency, and we ensure that everything from insurance to background screening to employee tax accounting is taken care of. In addition, should your primary caregiver become unavailable for any reason, we send a substitute immediately.



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## Question 2

What services will the caregiver provide and what services are restricted?



Perhaps the most important question to ask a home care provider is one of the simplest: which sorts of services can you expect to be provided as part of your care?

Keep in mind that caregivers may specialize in only certain types of services, or may not be legally allowed to perform certain services. It is extremely important to know beforehand which services your loved one will require so that the provider can match you with a caregiver who has the appropriate skill sets and qualifications.



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For example, your loved one might need assistance with bathing, personal grooming tasks, cooking meals, or keeping house. Other needs can include driving your loved one to appointments or social engagements, and picking up groceries.



Don't be afraid to be upfront about more personal issues that your loved one may need assistance with, especially as related to hygiene.

Don't be afraid to be upfront about more personal issues that your loved one may need help with, especially as related to hygiene. If your loved one has trouble in the bathroom, or with other deeply private concerns, a responsible home care provider will make sure to match you with a caregiver who has a strong and compassionate understanding of such matters.

At Comfort Home Care, we train our caregivers to assist with the activities of daily living, which include eating, bathing & personal hygiene, dressing, transferring, toileting, and continence. We also make sure that they are prepared to aid in cooking, light cleaning, laundry, exercise, and driving the client. Our number one priority is to be flexible in response to your loved one's needs as much as possible.



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# Question 3

How complex is the pricing?



Home care pricing plans can oftentimes be complex and confusing. It is important to make sure you understand everything that a provider may charge for, prior to hiring them.

For example, some providers may charge different rates for daytime and nighttime care, or a higher rate for weekends. Others may charge additional fees for certain services, or require that you prepay for the first several weeks of care at the time they are hired.



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One question you will want to know about immediately is whether the provider charges for the initial evaluation of your current situation – for example, what kinds of care will be needed now and in the future, and what type of caregiver is most compatible. However, not all providers will charge for their time in doing so.



If a provider charges extra for personal grooming services or for driving to an appointment, you deserve to know that ahead of time.

Make sure to inquire about this, and about any other fees, before putting any money down or signing a contract. If a provider charges extra for personal grooming services or for driving to an appointment, you deserve to know that ahead of time.

Comfort Home Care distinguishes itself by offering an extremely simple and easy-to-understand pricing structure. We charge a standard hourly rate that applies on days, nights, and weekends. In addition, we do not charge for our initial or ongoing evaluations from our Registered Nurses. The only additional charge we apply is a time-and-a-half rate during daytime hours of certain holidays, which we list on our website.



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## Question 4

What certifications will the caregiver have?



When identifying the types of services you will require from a home care provider, it is also extremely important to ensure that your individual caregiver is properly licensed for those services. The two licensing types most relevant to home care are **Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)** and **Geriatric Nursing Assistant (GNA)**.

A caregiver with CNA certification has gone through state-licensed training, passed both written and practical exams, and registered a required amount of experience in the medical field. A caregiver with GNA certification has passed similar requirements, as well as additional courses specifically related to caring for the elderly.



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In many states, a home care registry or agency may be allowed to provide unregistered caregivers, as long as they are limited to providing companion care services such as meal preparation or light cleaning. For advanced services such as assistance with toileting or administering medicine, you will need a caregiver with either CNA or GNA certification.



If an unlicensed caregiver is hired to provide only companion care, and later on the client begins to require more advanced services, that unlicensed caregiver will not be legally permitted to assist.

While it is not required by Maryland state law, Comfort Home Care chooses to only hire caregivers with CNA or GNA certification. This requirement of our caregivers is out of concern for *continuity of care*: if an unlicensed caregiver is hired to provide only companion care, and later on the client begins to require more advanced services, that unlicensed caregiver will not be legally permitted to assist. Clients using the services of Comfort Home Care don't need to worry about this situation occurring.



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## Question 5

How do you ensure that a caregiver is 100 percent trustworthy?



Because home care necessarily involves inviting another person into your home, it is natural to have concerns about safety and privacy. This is why it is vitally important to establish a trusting relationship with your provider before arranging for a caregiver.

Always make sure to check the credentials of the provider upfront. If they and their staff are not licensed by an official government body, you should seek a different provider immediately.



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Due to the deeply personal relationship between patient and caregiver, a responsible home care provider will do everything in their power to set you at ease regarding their hiring practices and quality control measures.



Always make sure to check the credentials of the provider upfront. If they and their staff are not licensed by an official government body, you should seek a different provider immediately.

Comfort Home Care is licensed by the State of Maryland's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene as a Residential Service Agency. All of our caregivers are licensed by the state, and we take very seriously our responsibility to ensure that they have passed thorough background checks.



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## Question 6

How do you accommodate memory care needs?



**Memory care** refers to special types of care provided to individuals who are experiencing dementia, Alzheimer's disease, or other long-term memory problems.

When selecting a home care provider for yourself or a loved one who suffers from such a condition, you will want to make sure that your caregiver is experienced at providing for the unique needs of a memory care client.



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Those with an advanced memory condition may require care beyond periodic visits, such as assistance with remembering appointments and medications. As a memory condition worsens, an experienced caregiver will need to be on hand to keep tabs on warning signs and manage the client's health as best as possible.



A caregiver will need to know how best to secure the patient's home to prevent wandering and minimize household injury risks.

In addition, since living at home normally means there are no cameras or security guards, it is especially important for a caregiver to be trained in addressing memory care. They will need to know how best to secure the patient's home to prevent wandering and minimize household injury risks.

Comfort Home Care is certified by the Alzheimer's Association in dementia and Alzheimer's care, and all of our caregivers have undergone training related to addressing memory care. Our staff are experienced with techniques for interacting and communicating with clients suffering from various kinds of memory conditions, in accordance with Alzheimer's Association guidelines.



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## Question 7

Is the caregiver trained to handle a medical emergency?



Even a caregiver who does not normally provide medical assistance to their client must be prepared to deal with a medical emergency.

In the event of a fall or other serious injury, or even a life-threatening emergency such as a heart attack or stroke, a caregiver needs to be able to act on a moment's notice. Any delay could risk a patient's condition worsening.



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A responsible home care provider will ensure that someone is available to contact 24 hours a day. Accidents can happen at any time, and your caregiver is often the first line of defense in ensuring that they are addressed as quickly and as urgently as possible.



Your caregiver is often the first line of defense in ensuring that accidents are addressed as quickly and as urgently as possible.

Make sure to discuss any medical conditions with your home care provider ahead of time. This will allow them to make sure they assign a caregiver whose skill set will allow them to respond to accidents or emergencies in the best possible manner.

Comfort Home Care understands how important it is that staff be available to respond to emergency situations immediately. We have a Care Manager on call 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to respond to urgent situations.



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# Get a free in-home care consultation



For more information about home care in Montgomery County and nearby areas, contact us today at [\(301\) 984-1401](tel:3019841401) or via email at [info@choosecomforthome.com](mailto:info@choosecomforthome.com)

Comfort Home Care is licensed as a Residential Service Agency by the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Office of Health Care Quality, License # R1178.



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