

# Ask the right questions.

This list of questions will help you (whether you are inquiring for yourself or for a friend or family member) to assess the quality of care and support. Ask these questions when you are choosing between congregate living environments (like nursing homes or assisted living) or home and community-based care services.



- **How do you describe the approach to care that your organization practices or is committed to?** *(Listen for descriptors like individualized care, person-centered or person-directed care, care that puts the person first, relationship-centered care, etc. – then ask them to elaborate on what they say. You want to get the sense that you or your family member are their focus, not what’s convenient for the organization alone.)*
- **What training are your employees required to complete when they are hired? Do they continue to receive training over time?** *(Are the leaders spreading the word and sharing the vision across their organization? Education is an important step in implementing the The Eden Alternative®. If people do not understand the direction the organization is going, it is difficult for them to get involved. Pay attention to the amount of education being provided, by whom, how often and who is receiving it. Education should be ongoing.)*
- **Is employee training focused on person-directed care practices? Is training also required that focuses on person-directed dementia care?** *(This goes back to the first question on this list.)*
- **How are employees encouraged to build relationships with the people they support?** *(You should be looking for stories that speak to how relationships are prioritized by this organization, the excitement of the person you are speaking to, their connection with people they serve, and their love for the job. See if they share stories that go beyond large group activities and tasks they assist with.)*
- **Are the same employees going to care for my friend or family member? Or do different employees work with them at different times?** *(Consistency of connection between employees and the people they support is essential to quality of life and quality of care. Only then can your or your family member’s preferences and choices be honored daily. You want to confirm if the organization prioritizes “consistent” or “permanent” assignment of employees.)*

- **Are you using any outside employees (temporary staff), or is everyone working here employed by the organization?** *(Some organization use temporary or agency staffing to fill in when they do not have enough employees. It can be upsetting to the Elders to have strangers in their home. You want to learn if this organization uses these temporary employees, how often and why.)*
- **How do friends and family members support care planning and conversations about care?** *(Does this organization value the involvement of the family members? Have they found a way to involve family members in meaningful ways? Are the family members experiencing well-being in their lives because of their connection to this organization?)*
- **Are family members invited to participate in training alongside employees? Or is separate training available for this purpose?** *(You want to hear that training is integrated or that there are at least options for this.)*
- **How do friends and family members support care planning and conversations about care?** *(Does this organization value the involvement of the family members? Have they found a way to involve family members in meaningful ways? Are the family members experiencing well-being in their lives because of their connection to this organization?)*
- **How are those closest to the Elders involved in daily decision-making that impacts the care you provide? Can you give me an example?** *(Some examples of daily decision-making could include personalizing the bathing experience, choices at mealtime, medication times, or waking and sleeping schedules. This organization should be striving to empower the Elders or those closest to them to be the daily decision makers. They are just starting this process, so listen for their first steps of how they are beginning to move decision-making closer to the Elders they serve.)*
- **Can you tell me what a typical day will be like for an Elder who is living with frailty in this home/through your support services?** *(Look to see if they share stories of how the Elders are well-known, how they continue to have opportunities to enjoy their simple pleasures, and that the employee care partners are working on eliminating loneliness, helplessness or boredom for Elders that are in the phase of their life where they are very frail.)*
- **Who is invited to participate in the care plan development meetings or conferences?** *(The care plan drives how the support services are provided to the Elder. The care plan needs to be driven by the Elder through the support of the whole care partner team. It is important that the employee care partners that spend the most time with the Elders are actively engaged in developing the care plans. Some organizations implementing The Eden Alternative may use the phrase “growth plan” instead of “care plan.”)*
- **How do you support choice for the individuals you serve and support?** *(You want to hear that they are committed to honoring the voice and choice of each individual they support. The unique needs and preferences of each person should drive actions and decisions.)*