

Sample questions for provider interviews

ORGANIZATION AND PHILOSOPHY:

What is your agency's mission and how do you make sure that staff support this mission?

In what ways do you seek and utilize input from people receiving supports and their families when developing policies and procedures?

Can you give a brief history of your agency (who started the agency, how long have you been providing residential supports, what other kinds of services do you provide)?

Is this agency for profit or non-profit?

Describe how the agency is managed (board of directors, chain of command, etc.).

Are there any people with disabilities or family members on your board?

Do you have any written materials about the agency that we can take with us?

Are you accredited by any accrediting bodies?

Does the agency hold memberships in any professional organizations? Do any of the employees?

Does your agency have good relationships with neighbors and/or neighborhood associations in the areas where you support people? How are these relationships established and nurtured?

What is your agency's grievance procedure for consumers?

How does your agency assess and improve the quality of services?

How are individuals and their families involved in assessing the quality of support services?

How long has your agency supported people within the community?

Has your agency ever received any citations for violations of regulations? If so, can you describe them and what was done to correct the violations?

What are your agency's outside resources for information and guidance in areas such as behavioral support, medical care, therapies, staff development, etc.

SERVICES & SUPPORTS:

How does a person qualify for your services with your agency?

What services can the agency provide?

Does the agency specialize in providing services to person with any specific support needs?

What are these services (list services needed by your child)?

Is there a waiting list for services? How long is the waiting list?

When could you start working with my child?

If my child is not happy in this setting how would the agency work with her to learn why and make necessary changes?

How do you make sure that the supports in my child's service plan are provided?

What if my child wants/needs supports that are not in her service plan?

How does your agency evaluate the individual's and/or parent's satisfaction with supports?

How do you individualize services to meet a person's needs and preferences?

Under what circumstances would you discontinue supports? What would the process be for discontinuing supports (type of notification, length of notice, etc).

To what degree is your agency willing to develop new supports for individuals who do not "fit" into existing programs?

How often are support plans reviewed with individuals and their families?

Who decides when people need to be brought together for support planning meetings?

STAFFING & DIRECT SUPPORT TRAINING

How are the individuals living in the home and/or parents involved in hiring, training, and evaluating staff?

What can my child or I do if we are not happy with the work performance of staff?

How do staff learn what is important to the individuals receiving services?

Can individuals living in the home and/or their parents teach staff how to support them?

How do you train new staff before they work with individuals?

What ongoing training is required for direct support staff?

What training is provided about specific disabilities or diagnosis?

Who provides training to staff?

How does your agency ensure that staff actually use what they have been taught in training?

Can parents assist with training about their child's specific diagnosis or needs and preferences?

Does the agency offer or encourage any training that is not required by regulations?

How often are supervisors in the homes?

What is the typical staff to supervisor ratio?

How long have most of your staff been with your agency? What is your staff turn over rate?

What qualifications and characteristics do you look for when hiring direct support professionals?

Prior to receiving services can staff visit and spend time with my child so that they can get to know her?

How many different staff would provide my child's supports?

Does the agency use temporary staffing agencies?

How is staff support evaluated? What routine feedback is provided to staff?

Describe the screening process you use when hiring staff?

What are your arrangements for backup staff in case a staff member calls off?

FAMILY INVOLVEMENT:

In what ways do you promote the involvement of family members in the lives of the people you support?

What role do parents play in the program?

How often or in what situations will parents be contacted?

What situations can parents/family expect to be notified about?

Can parents call direct care staff?

What opportunities do you provide for parents or families to get together?

Do you provide any kind of support group for parents and families?

How often do staff communicate with families to update them or let them know that things are going well?

Are there any restrictions on visits from parents?

Do you inform parents who are not legal guardians when their child has signed a consent form for activities, medical procedures, etc.?

HEALTH & SAFETY:

What procedures do you have in place to ensure the safety of the people you support?

Who supervises medical needs?

Who will take my child to medical appointments?

Who will communicate with the doctor or therapist if there is a problem?

Who will assist my child with routine medical needs and to take medications?

How are staff trained to help with medications and routine medical needs?

What training does staff have in first aid?

What kinds of safety precautions are taken in the house?

- Are medications locked?
- Who has access to cleaning products?
- What are the procedures for severe weather?
- What is done to ensure safety in case of a fire?

What procedures are in place to prevent abuse?

Will my child be able to stay in the house alone?

Will my child be able to go into the community alone?

What is done to prevent abuse and neglect? What is done to address abuse and neglect should it occur?

What is the process used to assess the vulnerability of individuals and how are they protected?

How do staff handle situations in which the behavior of one person is harmful or causes vulnerability to another person?

How can families and consumers reach different staff at all levels during an emergency outside of business hours?

What backup systems are in place for medical or behavioral emergencies?

Can my child keep the same doctor and specialist if she wants?

How does your agency ensure that individuals receive needed ongoing medical services?

How would staff handle situations when individuals refuse to take medications?

SELF-DETERMINATION & CHOICE:

Describe how staff support individuals in making informed choices.

How will my child be supported in setting up preferred daily routines?

How does the agency support cultural or religious differences?

How does the agency actively provide opportunities for choices in the daily routine?

In what ways are traditions or preferred rituals for holidays and special occasions accommodated?

Are there "house rules?" Who makes them? How can they be changed?

How do you respond to life changes such as marriage, retirement, shift changes at work, etc.).

Can individuals choose not to do tasks that they do not want to do?

Can individuals eat meals at times or places other than the standard?

To what extent can individuals decorate their rooms to their liking?

Is there a schedule for daily/weekly activities in the homes where you provide supports?

Can individuals have personal belongings in common areas?

What accommodations are made for religious practices?

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION & SOCIAL LIFE:

In what ways do staff support involvement in the community?

How is staffing managed to accommodate community activities?

Can my child invite friends and family to visit with her in the home? What will staff do to facilitate these visits?

How will my child be supported in meeting new people?

Can you give me some examples of how you have helped others become a part of the community?

How would your agency support my child to continue participation in community activities that she is already involved with?

What are your agency's policies regarding intimate relationships between individuals receiving supports? Between an individual receiving supports and a friend?

How does the agency support individuals to develop friendships with people in the community?

Describe some of the neighborhood activities and events that individuals you support take part in.

How will your agency support my child in maintaining relationships developed where he or she lived previously?

To what extent does your agency promote the involvement of volunteers who want to help individuals take a more active role in the community? Does your agency provide any training for volunteers?

PRIVACY

How is the privacy of information in a person's records protected?

How will the staff support my child's need for privacy?

Do staff need to get permission before they discuss information about my child with other agencies or individuals and how does this process work?

BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS

How are disagreements among individuals living together resolved?

FINANCES

How are personal funds handled?

Would you provide reports to parents about their child's finances and how often?

TRANSPORTATION

What kind of transportation would be available to my child?

Are staff who drive individuals in company or personal vehicles required to have a good driving record?
How is the driving record of staff checked and how often?

Do staff who drive have to complete any additional training?

If staff will be transporting my child in their own vehicles does the agency have any a system in place to make sure that they have insurance and the vehicle is in good repair?

HOME MAINTENANCE

How would my child's home be maintained? Who would make repairs?

How would complete housekeeping tasks that my child is unable to do for herself?

Who prepares the meals? How much could my child be involved in preparing meals?

QUESTIONS SPECIFIC TO LARGE AGENCIES:

How does the administration assure that front line managers are capable of supervising their employees?

What measures are taken to maintain communication throughout the different levels of the organization?

How does the administration observe and assess services in order to evaluate for quality assurance.

If relief staff are called in to assist what steps are taken to make certain that the staff are familiar enough with an individual to provide for their needs and ensure safety.

How does the agency make sure that all tasks and work assignments are completed?

QUESTIONS SPECIFIC TO SMALL AGENCIES:

How does the agency make certain that staff who are responsible for a large variety of tasks are proficient in all areas?

What plans, if any, does the agency have for future growth?

If growth is planned, has the agency considered ways to accommodate increased work load without jeopardizing quality?

In what ways does the agency offer staff opportunities for professional growth or creative activities?

MISCELLANEOUS

What home making activities would my child be expected to participate in?

Would my child have any involvement in planning menus or grocery shopping?

How would staff assist my child to plan and participate in leisure activities at home?

Would any individuals or staff be able to smoke in the homes? What is your agencies smoking policy?

How is an individuals mail handled?

How does the agency make sure that people are treated with respect?

How does your agency handle situations in which an individual is unable to attend work or day program due to illness or other reasons? What if an individual just chooses not to attend work or day program?

How do staff encourage individuals to eat healthy foods?

How do staff support individuals living together to make group decisions?

How do staff make sure that individuals are aware of their rights and feel comfortable reporting violations?

QUESTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS OR FAMILIES WHO ARE RECEIVING SERVICES FROM A PROVIDER:

If you are unhappy with something in your home how do you go about getting it changed?

Do staff “take care” of individuals or provide support according to their plan and individual preferences?

How has the agency responded to your concerns and complaints?

QUESTIONS & THINGS TO OBSERVE AT HOME VISITS:

Does the interactions between staff and individuals living in the home seem respectful and friendly?

Are the individual's rooms personalized? Is there an attempt to personalize common areas of the house?

Does the home décor, level of neatness, and organization appear to match the preferences and personalities for people living in the home?

Is the home clean and in good repair?

Do staff respect the privacy of people who live in the home?

How structured does the routine appear? Does there appear to be some flexibility in the structure?