

# Finding the right residential service provider

*Long Version*

**A guide for people with disabilities and caregivers**



Florida  
Developmental  
Disabilities  
Council, Inc.



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## Long Version: Residential Tool

### Who is completing this tool? (Mark all that apply)

- Person looking for a place to live
- Caregiver
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Instructions

Use this list to help decide if a place is right for you. This list covers 7 areas that you may want to ask about during your visit. Each area will have questions to ask on its own page. When you see the words 'I' or 'me' in the questions, they refer to the person who will be receiving services.

Note: **This list is only a guide.** You do not need to ask every question. Look through the list and pick the questions that are important to you. This list is not the only tool you may use to make a decision. Filling out this list does not guarantee that you will find a place that is right for you.



**Step 1.** Prepare for your visit. Look at the items on the left page. Circle or highlight the questions that you think are important to ask. You don't have to ask everything—pick what matters most to you.



**Step 2.** During your visit, look around. Do you like what you see in the neighborhood? Do you like the location of this home? Are you comfortable with having roommates or other people in your home? These are not good or bad things, but important things to think about when deciding if this a place you'd like to live. Write down any thoughts you have, as well as answers from the staff, in the Notes column on the left. Write down what you see or learn from the visit.






**Step 3.** Look at your notes and rate each item on the right side. If most of the answers are "yes," this could be a good place. If most answers are "maybe" or "no," you might want to think about other places.



## Living space


#	Statement	Notes
1	<p><b>I have access to safe, comfortable spaces.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What common spaces do I have access to? At what times?</li> <li>• Are common spaces clean and tidy?</li> <li>• Are common spaces physically accessible to meet my support needs (for example, wide doorways)?</li> <li>• Are my sensory sensitivities considered (such as lighting or noise levels)?</li> </ul>	
2	<p><b>I have access to private spaces.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do I have my own room?</li> <li>• Does the place feel like home?</li> <li>• If there are roommates or housemates, do I get to pick my roommates or housemates?</li> <li>• Can I lock the door to my bedroom?</li> <li>• Will my belongings be safe?</li> <li>• Can I decorate my room?</li> <li>• Can I have visitors in my room? In other private spaces? At what times?</li> <li>• Are my interests or ability levels considered when making roommate or housemate decisions?</li> </ul>	
3	<p><b>There is structure and routine at the home.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much do daily routines vary?</li> <li>• How long do people usually live here? In the past 3 months, how many people have moved out? How many people have moved in?</li> <li>• In the past 3 months, have many staff have left their job here? How many new staff have been hired?</li> <li>• How are new staff trained?</li> </ul>	
4	<p><b>House rules are clear and fair.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the house rules? (Ask if they have a list you can take home.)</li> <li>• What happens if someone breaks a house rule?</li> <li>• Are the house rules available to give to families?</li> <li>• Do I agree with the house rules?</li> </ul>	

<b>Living space</b>		<b>Yes</b> 	<b>Maybe</b> 	<b>No</b> 
1	I have access to safe, comfortable spaces.			
2	I have access to private spaces.			
3	There is structure and routine at the home.			
4	House rules are clear and fair.			



## Health and safety

#	Statement	Notes
5	<p><b>Housemates are friendly and kind.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do housemates get along with one another?</li> <li>• Are housemates friends with one another?</li> <li>• How often can I gather or meet with housemates?</li> </ul>	
6	<p><b>There are enough trained staff to support me.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How many staff are present during the day? At night?</li> <li>• How are staff trained?</li> <li>• How much experience do staff have in their work?</li> <li>• What is the staff-to-resident ratio?</li> </ul>	
7	<p><b>Medical needs are well supported.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does the residence support my medical needs (such as physical therapy, medication management, medical appointments, exercise, mental health, and wellness)?</li> <li>• Who makes medical decisions (if not me)? The families? Service providers?</li> <li>• Are medical professionals (such as registered nurses or licensed practical nurses) on staff to care for any complex medical needs?</li> <li>• Who handles scheduling medical appointments? Are staff or residents responsible for scheduling appointments, planning for transportation, and avoiding scheduling conflicts?</li> <li>• Are staff available to take me to medical appointments (and help me answer questions during appointments, as needed)?</li> <li>• How accessible is the facility to physical disabilities? Are there appropriate handrails, ramps, or walk-in showers?</li> <li>• If an emergency arises, when do staff call an ambulance? When do staff call the police? When do staff notify family?</li> </ul>	
8	<p><b>Medications are administered safely.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the medication management policy?</li> <li>• How often are medications administered? By whom?</li> <li>• Do I have access to over-the-counter medications?</li> <li>• What happens if there is a medication error? Who is notified?</li> <li>• Can I choose my pharmacy?</li> <li>• Are medications refilled in a timely manner? If there is a change in medication, can the change be made in a timely manner?</li> <li>• Is my family notified when there is a change in recommended medications?</li> <li>• Are there packaging options that make it easier to take my medications (such as bubble packs)?</li> </ul>	
9	<p><b>Personal hygiene is supported, as needed.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can I have help with personal hygiene if I need it?</li> </ul>	




Health and safety		Yes 	Maybe 	No 
5	Housemates are friendly and kind.			
6	There are enough trained staff to support my needs.			
7	Medical needs are well supported.			
8	Medications are administered safely.			
9	Personal hygiene is supported, as needed.			



## Support for positive behavior

#	Statement	Notes
10	<p><b>Service provider teaches skills that help support positive behaviors.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kinds of behavioral skills are taught?</li> <li>• How are these skills reinforced?</li> <li>• How are these teachings tailored to me?</li> <li>• Are there behavioral goals for me? If so, how is my progress toward those goals tracked?</li> </ul>	
11	<p><b>Staff take action when needed to keep people from hurting themselves or others.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do residents ever become aggressive with one another? How often?</li> <li>• Do residents ever take advantage of one another?</li> <li>• How are challenging behaviors supported? Is restraint used?</li> <li>• What do staff do to keep me safe?</li> </ul>	
12	<p><b>Staff are trained in best practices to support positive behaviors.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do staff receive regular training to support positive behaviors? What credentials or certifications do staff have to support positive behaviors?</li> <li>• Are enough staff available to support my behavioral needs?</li> <li>• Is data collected on my behavior and used to promote growth?</li> <li>• Is there a behavior analyst available?</li> </ul>	






<b>Support for positive behavior</b>		<b>Yes</b> 	<b>Maybe</b> 	<b>No</b> 
10	Service provider teaches skills that support positive behaviors.			
11	Staff take action, when needed, to keep people from hurting themselves and others.			
12	Staff are trained in best practices to support positive behaviors.			



## Activities with other people




#	Statement	Notes
13	<p><b>Service provider helps me find transportation when I want or need to go somewhere.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How available is transportation?</li> <li>• What types of transportation are available (such as a public bus or private rides provided by the residential program)?</li> <li>• Do staff help arrange paratransit trips?</li> <li>• Is transportation available only to certain areas or within a certain distance? To medical appointments? To a job? To adult day training?</li> <li>• During what hours is transportation available?</li> <li>• Can I contact staff if a ride doesn't show up or there are other transit problems?</li> <li>• What does transportation cost?</li> </ul>	
14	<p><b>Service provider supports my personal relationships.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much time can I spend with people outside the residence, if I wish?</li> <li>• Does the service provider offer relationship coaching?</li> <li>• Am I supported in relationships (such as romantic, platonic, or familial) if I choose to have them? What does this support look like?</li> <li>• Who can take me on trips outside the residence? For how long? How often?</li> <li>• How do staff help me manage conflict with others living in the residence?</li> </ul>	
15	<p><b>Service provider helps me engage in the social and community activities I choose.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What kinds of social and community activities can I participate in? How often?</li> <li>• When I go out to places, do I get to pick where I go?</li> <li>• Does the service provider help me make social connections, if desired?</li> </ul>	

<b>Activities with other people</b>		<b>Yes</b> 	<b>Maybe</b> 	<b>No</b> 
13	Service provider helps me find transportation when I want or need to go somewhere.			
14	Service provider supports my personal relationships.			
15	Service provider helps me engage in the social and community activities I choose.			



## Communication between you, your family, and the provider




#	Statement	Notes
16	<p><b>Service provider communicates in ways that my family and I prefer.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What languages do staff speak?</li> <li>• What types of communication methods are available (such as a house phone or house computer)?</li> <li>• Do staff understand how I communicate?</li> <li>• Can I communicate with staff in languages other than English?</li> <li>• Is internet service available to me? When? What does it cost?</li> <li>• Can I have my own phone?</li> <li>• Is my family notified if there is an incident in the residence that affects me?</li> </ul>	
17	<p><b>Service provider updates families on program activities, my wellness, and other important topics.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How often does the provider give updates to my family? What kinds of updates? Meetings, calls?</li> <li>• Is my family made aware of all staffing and housemate changes?</li> <li>• Do staff consider suggestions and input from me and my family?</li> </ul>	
18	<p><b>I can communicate with family as much as I want.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How often can I talk with my family?</li> <li>• How often can I visit with my family?</li> </ul>	
19	<p><b>Service provider coordinates and communicates with my support team (if desired).</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the service provider coordinate with other care teams (such as specialists, doctors, or nurses) on my behalf? If yes, which teams? What level of communication do they offer?</li> <li>• If my family and I do not want the service provider to communicate with other care teams, is this an option?</li> </ul>	
20	<p><b>Service provider clearly explains financial expectations to me and my family.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How are the residential services paid for?</li> <li>• What cost sharing (if any) is expected of me?</li> <li>• Do costs change if my income changes?</li> <li>• Am I given an allowance or control over my money?</li> <li>• How might the provider teach me about financial independence?</li> </ul>	

<b>Communication between you, your family, and the provider</b>		<b>Yes</b> 	<b>Maybe</b> 	<b>No</b> 
16	Service provider communicates in ways that my family and I prefer.			
17	Service provider updates my family on program activities, my wellness, and other important topics.			
18	I can communicate with family as much as I want.			
19	Service provider coordinates and communicates with my support teams (if desired).			
20	Service provider clearly explains financial expectations to me and my family.			



## Choices you can make

#	Statement	Notes
21	<p><b>Daily activities match my interests.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does a normal day look like?</li> <li>• What are some activities the residence did last month?</li> <li>• Are new activities added based on my interests?</li> </ul>	
22	<p><b>I can choose my daily activities.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How much free time do I have?</li> <li>• Am I allowed to choose my own activities?</li> <li>• What happens if I do not want to take part in an activity?</li> <li>• Do I decide when I do things (such as eat meals, wake up, or go to bed)?</li> <li>• Do I choose the foods I eat? Do staff ensure that I am eating healthy, well-rounded meals?</li> <li>• Do I choose my clothes?</li> </ul>	
23	<p><b>Service provider helps me achieve my goals and make life decisions.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do I choose my own goals or make my own life decisions?</li> <li>• How does the service provider help me meet my goals?</li> <li>• What are some examples of goals I could work toward?</li> </ul>	
24	<p><b>Service provider supports my independence.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If I want to do an activity outside of the usual activities the residence provides, how would I take part in it?</li> <li>• Can I take part in activities in the community that are not agency sponsored?</li> <li>• Can I leave the residence on my own, without a staff member?</li> <li>• Can I go on errands? With or without support from a staff member?</li> <li>• If allowed to leave: Is there a curfew, or a certain hour when the I need to be home?</li> <li>• Am I taught to or expected to prepare my own meals?</li> <li>• Can I stay overnight at another location?</li> <li>• Can I have a job or seek employment? Are there limits on the hours I can work?</li> </ul>	




Choices you can make		Yes 	Maybe 	No 
21	Daily activities match my interests.			
22	I can choose my daily activities.			
23	Service provider helps me achieve my goals and make life decisions.			
24	Service provider supports my independence.			



## Respect for all residents

#	Statement	Notes
25	<p><b>Service provider helps me take part in cultural and religious activities (such as going to places of worship or religious celebrations).</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are staff and other residents respectful of my culture and beliefs?</li> <li>• Do staff seek out cultural and religious events for me?</li> <li>• Is transportation available to religious and cultural events?</li> </ul>	
26	<p><b>Service provider keeps my information private if my family or I ask them to.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What information is shared with family (such as safety information)? With other providers?</li> <li>• What do staff do if I ask them to not share important information with my family or providers?</li> <li>• Under what circumstances would staff break confidentiality?</li> </ul>	
27	<p><b>Staff treat and talk to me with respect.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What does my relationship with staff look like?</li> </ul>	



<b>Respect for all residents</b>		<b>Yes</b> 	<b>Maybe</b> 	<b>No</b> 
25	Service provider helps me take part in cultural and religious activities (such as going to places of worship or religious celebrations).			
26	Service provider keeps my information private if my family or I ask them to.			
27	Staff treat and talk to me with respect.			

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This toolkit was developed for:



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