

Hopefully you do not have or will never need nursing care for your child. Hopefully, if you have nursing care for your child you are very happy with the services you are receiving. However, if you find yourself unhappy with your nursing situation or one day need to find nursing care, I have come up with several questions through experience to help when interviewing agencies for your child and your family. These questions may also be helpful for interviewing babysitters or respite care providers.

How do you train your nurses or make sure they have training? What continuing training do you require? Be specific to your child's situation for example trach, g-tube, oxygen, Diastat, injections, etc.

How do you orient a nurse to a patient? Is a home visit required? How long is it? How many visits? Will you be notified before someone comes over?

How do you handle a nurse being late? Does she report it through the agency who then contacts you or does the nurse directly contact you? How will I be notified if a scheduled nurse changes?

How should you handle when a nurse does something you can not tolerate like falling asleep? Will you see that nurse again?

What communication style does the agency use? How often do schedulers or case managers call, email, or come to the house? How am I to communicate problems? How soon will problems with nurses or schedule be corrected?

How many nurses do you have in the area or will you need to recruit some to cover the case? Is the agency willing to pay nurses overtime until the case is fully staffed?

What does the agency supply for the nurses and how often or regularly is it delivered to my home and how does it get there? What if you run out?

How does the agency track not just medicines but daily therapies or cleaning that must be preformed? Does the agency track them the same way?

How often is a nursing staff schedule created – monthly, bi-weekly, weekly? Does the agency create all the schedules for the branch at the same time like at the beginning of the month? When can you expect to receive your schedule? When does the agency need requests for the next planning period? How many cases does each scheduler handle?

How are hours from missed shifts handled? Are they lost if you don't get a replacement that day or can they be used for a double shift later? Is the answer the same for private insurance as it is for GAPP/Medicaid programs?

Can the nurse accompany you to doctor visits? If not what must be done to request it? What are the guidelines for the nurse to accompany you on other non-medical trips from the house?

Of course other questions or problems may arise as you work with an agency or due to your child's specific issues. I suggest you write down the answers you get from each agency and keep it. Also keep any email correspondence with an agency just in case an answer changes at a later date. Most of these questions arose after our family had already chosen an agency. How many times as parents of special needs children do we lament over not asking the right question because we just didn't know to ask it? How many times are we so overwhelmed that we don't think of questions. I hope this list of questions helps your family ask the right questions in times of stress or the unknown.