

# How To Choose Services For You and Your Loved Ones

## A guide from CARF

Finding the right service provider can be difficult; you want a provider that will help you and your family members with a genuine, person-centered attitude. You and your family have the ultimate power to choose your services. This guide provides some pointers on how to help gauge which provider will work best for you.

When shopping for services, there are some things that may help you move through the process:

### **Know what to ask before you go.**

How many times have you left a place and said, "Oh, I should have asked about that!" If you take time to prepare questions, you can direct the session to get them answered.

### **Take notes.**

This will allow you to refer back and compare between service providers.

Take a trusted friend or family member with you. Having a second set of ears can provide perspective later when you're making a decision.

### **Should I schedule an appointment?**

Sometimes a simple call with questions will give you a good sense if a provider will meet your needs. In a preliminary chat you may ask:

- **What services do you offer?**
- **Will there be bilingual staff or sign language interpreters if I need them?**
- **Will my services be covered by insurance, government funding (such as Medicare or Medicaid), or other resources?**
- **How do I feel when I walk in?**

### **First impressions are often right.**

And although your final decision will be based on several factors, you can assess some important attitudes of the service provider before getting past the lobby.

When you walk in, there are many things you may notice:

- **Was I greeted in a friendly manner?**
- **Did they see me in a reasonable amount of time?**
- **Do the premises appear to be well maintained, clean, and safe?**
- **What are your services?**

Now is the time to get down to the nitty-gritty. Besides asking about what services are provided, you may want to ask the organization these additional questions:

- How long does it take to begin services?
- Is there a waiting list?
- How often will I receive services, and how long will they last?
- How will I or my family participate in planning services?
- Are your staff members qualified for the work they do?
- What are my rights?
- What would my responsibilities be?
- What happens to individuals like me here?
- What can I expect as a result of services?
- What will this cost me?
- If I need transportation, how can you help?
- If I need other assistance, is it available?
- Who can I contact if I have more questions?

Now what?

Now you get to make decisions about what service you would like. This is a personal choice that involves you and your family members. As you look back on your notes and consider the opinions of friends or family members who accompanied you, there are some final questions that are relevant as you decide to participate in services:

- Overall, was the provider courteous, helpful, and respectful?
- Did they answer my questions?
- If they couldn't answer my questions, did they refer me to somebody who could, or offer to follow up with answers?
- If they didn't provide all the services I need, did they refer me to an organization that could provide what they don't?
- Are the hours and location convenient for me?
- Would I be comfortable receiving services here?
- Did staff members seem interested in me and the services I need?
- Did the provider follow up when it said it would?
- Where can I find an assurance of quality?

**Look for CARF accreditation. It shows the provider is committed to meeting international standards of quality.**

*CARF is an independent, nonprofit organization that accredits several types of specialized services, including aging services, behavioral health, child and youth services, DMEPOS, employment and community services, and medical rehabilitation for persons of all ages.*