

FINDING THE RIGHT PROVIDER FOR YOU

When you're looking for a provider to support yourself or your child, it can be hard to know who will give you quality services. The choices can be overwhelming, and you might hear conflicting information from different people. This guide will help you understand what to look for in a provider, as well as the questions you can ask to understand how they will treat your child and your family. We've broken it into different areas to make it easier to understand.

COMMUNICATION AND COLLABORATION

- **Collaboration:** Your provider should work well with other professionals and value your input as a parent.
- **Open-Door Policy:** You're always welcome to observe sessions, whether for a few minutes or the entire time.
- **Regular Check-ins:** Frequent conversations about progress and feedback with you and your child are key. They should be open to hearing if you would like a change.
- **Personalized Care:** Assessments should be detailed and tailored to your child's unique needs.
- **Referrals When Needed:** A good provider will connect you with other specialists if additional support is needed.

RESPECTING YOUR CHILD

- **Sensory Supports:** Sensory accommodations are offered freely; the child doesn't need to "earn" them.
- **Emotional Check-ins:** Providers regularly assess how your child is feeling and help them regulate before expecting them to learn or perform tasks.
- **Encouraging Creativity:** Staff focus on curiosity and creativity rather than relying only on rewards for motivation.
- **Respect for Boundaries:** Your child can say no, and their choices are respected.
- **Empowering Choice:** The provider gives your child real choices.
- **Building Relationships:** Providers show genuine care and build a trusting relationship with your child.
- **Communication Freedom:** Your child is encouraged to communicate in the way that works best for them, whether that's with AAC, spoken words, or other methods.

THERAPEUTIC PROCESS AND GOALS

- **Self-Advocacy:** Goals focus on helping your child develop self-advocacy skills for more independence in less restrictive settings.
- **Functional Goals:** The therapy targets meaningful, practical skills.
- **Personalized Goals:** Goals are based on your child's needs and your family's preferences.
- **Parent Involvement:** Parents and caregivers are trained to support treatment goals at home.
- **Collaborative Planning:** Your child is involved in planning and setting their own goals.
- **Interest-Based Therapy:** Therapy incorporates your child's interests, but not as a reward—just as part of their learning.

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You may not know right away if a provider is going to be a good fit. It's ok to work with someone for a little bit and after seeing more decide that you want to look for someone else. You can also ask questions as you get started to get a better sense of how they'll work.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

- How long do direct staff typically stay within your agency?
- What attracts employees to want to work here?
- What if I do not feel a direct therapist is a good match?
- What background checks are given to BCBAs, behavioral therapists, and other staff members?
- What training do your therapists receive? How often?
- What are your areas of expertise?
- How many hours a week do you recommend? Why?
- What does a typical session look like? Can I sit in on one or more?
- How will I be involved as a parent to support our goals at home?
- How can I alert you if I see any practices I don't like?

The Autism Society of America has produced an informational guide to ABA Therapy that includes a section for assessing providers. If you are looking for an ABA provider, this is a wonderful resource. [Click here to view it.](#)

RED FLAGS: THESE INDICATE A PROBLEM

- **Lack of Autism Knowledge:** Staff repeat myths or don't show a deep understanding of autism.
- **Insufficient Training:** Staff aren't properly trained or there aren't enough credentialed supervisors overseeing the treatment.
- **Miracle Promises:** The provider guarantees unrealistic outcomes or "cures."
- **Masking Autism:** Goals are focused on making your child seem less autistic, just to fit neurotypical standards.
- **Excessive Hours:** A high number of therapy hours is recommended without a strong reason or explanation.
- **Punishment Over Positive Support:** The provider uses punishment instead of positive reinforcement.
- **Aggressive or Controlling:** Interactions are aggressive, controlling, or disrespectful.
- **Ignoring Overstimulation:** The provider doesn't listen or stop when your child is overstimulated, dysregulated, or overwhelmed.
- **Focus on Problem Behaviors:** Treatment is centered on eliminating "problem behaviors" instead of teaching new skills.