

Care Options Comparison Worksheet

Use one grid per round of calls. A good provider answers all of this without irritation — irritation is itself an answer.

Before you compare anything, make one call

Fifteen minutes on the phone will tell you more about what exists in your parent's county than a week of searching.

- ☐ **Eldercare Locator — 800-677-1116.** Connects you to the local Area Agency on Aging. Ask specifically about respite.
- ☐ **Dial 211** from any phone for a local specialist who knows what's available nearby.
- ☐ **If your parent is a veteran or a veteran's surviving spouse,** start at caregiver.va.gov. These benefits are badly underused.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Provider name			
Type of care <i>companion, personal care, home health, adult day, facility</i>			
Services provided			
Cost <i>hourly / monthly; overnight, holiday, mileage</i>			
Minimum hours per visit <i>many agencies require 4</i>			
Availability <i>days and hours, including weekends</i>			
Licensed in this state <i>check the state's licensing records</i>			
Insured and bonded <i>liability and workers' comp</i>			
Background checks <i>who runs them, how recently</i>			
Staff training <i>including dementia training</i>			
Supervision <i>does a nurse or supervisor visit, how often</i>			
Emergency / no-show coverage <i>what happens at 6 a.m. if nobody arrives</i>			
Replacement caregivers <i>consistency of staffing; do you meet substitutes</i>			

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Medication assistance <i>what they're permitted to do varies by state</i>			
Transportation <i>whose car, insured how</i>			
Communication with family <i>notes, app, call after each visit</i>			
Cancellation policy			
Reviews and complaint record <i>state records; Medicare Care Compare</i>			
Your impression			
Your parent's impression <i>they have to like the person, or it won't last</i>			

Respite — put it on the calendar

- ☐ Another family member genuinely taking over, not "helping"
- ☐ In-home respite care
- ☐ Adult day services — often far cheaper than equivalent in-home hours
- ☐ Short facility stays, including for a week while you travel
- ☐ Meal or housekeeping help that removes standing work
- ☐ Scheduled, recurring, protected caregiver time off

Respite that exists in principle — I could get someone if I needed to — isn't respite. Set it up before exhaustion: at the point you're desperate, arranging anything feels impossible and every option looks inadequate.

Protect the caregiver

- ☐ Keep your own medical appointments
- ☐ Sleep — repeated nighttime disruption is a signal for overnight help, not a test of endurance
- ☐ Exercise, even briefly
- ☐ Social relationships — ask people to keep inviting you even when you decline
- ☐ Spiritual or emotional support, whatever form that takes
- ☐ Time away that isn't spent on caregiving logistics
- ☐ Realistic limits, said out loud before they become hard limits
- ☐ A caregiver support group, in person or online

Resentment, grief, and guilty relief when a visit ends are what exhaustion sounds like from the inside. They say nothing about how much you love your parent. But if the weight has stopped lifting — no sleep, no enjoyment, a flat hopelessness — talk to a doctor or therapist. Caregiver depression is common and treatable, and you don't have to get worse first to deserve help.

Signs the current plan has been outgrown

- ☐ Your parent can't safely be left alone
- ☐ Nighttime supervision is required
- ☐ Transfers or toileting have become unsafe — for either of you
- ☐ Wandering is occurring
- ☐ Medications can't be managed safely at home
- ☐ **The caregiver's physical or mental health is deteriorating**
- ☐ The home can't be adapted enough
- ☐ Care costs have outrun what the arrangement can support

Next steps: your parent's doctor, the Area Agency on Aging, and — if finances are complicated — an elder law attorney. Hospital social workers and geriatric care managers are built for exactly this decision.

Compare certified providers: Medicare Care Compare — [medicare.gov/care-compare](https://www.medicare.gov/care-compare)

Problems with a facility: your Long-Term Care Ombudsman advocates for residents of nursing homes and assisted living — ltcombudsman.org, or ask the Eldercare Locator.

One more thing. Bringing in help can feel like breaking a promise — sometimes a literal one, made years ago in a different body, before anyone knew what would be required. You're allowed to have made a promise you can't keep. What your parent meant was *don't abandon me*, and you can keep that one anywhere.

Questions still to ask