



The 15 Questions Every Family Should Ask When Choosing Memory Care in Charlotte (But 90% Never Do)

The insider's guide to finding exceptional dementia care in the Charlotte area—what to ask, why it matters, and red flags to avoid

When Mark began touring memory care facilities for his father in South Charlotte, he was armed with a list of standard questions: "What activities do you offer?" "How much does it cost?" "Can I see a room?"

Three months later, after his father experienced a medical emergency that revealed serious gaps in care, Mark realized he'd been asking all the wrong questions.

The truth is that most families spend more time researching a new car than choosing memory care. They focus on amenities and monthly fees while missing the critical details that determine quality of life—and sometimes, life itself.

If you're evaluating memory care options in Charlotte, Concord, Matthews, or surrounding areas, these 15 questions will help you make an informed decision that protects your loved one and gives your family peace of mind.

The Foundation Questions: Staff and Care Quality

1. "What's your actual staff-to-resident ratio during evenings and weekends?"

Why this matters: Facilities often advertise their best ratios—usually daytime weekday numbers. But emergencies don't keep business hours.

What to listen for: Specific numbers for each shift. Quality facilities maintain consistent ratios. At residential assisted living homes like Magnolia, ratios typically stay at 1:3 or 1:4 around the clock.

Red flag: Vague answers like "we're adequately staffed" or significantly different ratios between shifts.

2. "Can I meet the actual caregivers who will work with my loved one?"

Why this matters: In Charlotte's competitive job market, memory care staff turnover averages 75% annually. Knowing who provides daily care—and their training—is crucial.

What to ask: How long have current staff been there? What's their specific dementia training? Do they speak your loved one's primary language?

Red flag: High turnover, inability to introduce you to key staff, or caregivers with minimal dementia-specific training.

3. "How do you handle sundowning and behavioral changes without immediately medicating?"

Why this matters: Sundowning affects 60% of dementia patients. Over-medication is a serious concern in memory care, often used for staff convenience rather than resident benefit.

What to look for: Specific non-pharmaceutical strategies like redirecting activities, environmental modifications, or one-on-one attention. Quality facilities have detailed behavioral intervention protocols.

Red flag: Facilities that immediately mention medication or can't describe alternative strategies.

The Safety and Medical Questions Most Families Skip

4. "What happens during medical emergencies and which hospitals do you work with?"

Why this matters: In Charlotte, response times and hospital quality vary significantly by location. Knowing the emergency protocol can save precious time.

What to ask: Response time expectations, which EMT services they use, preferred hospitals, and how they communicate with families during emergencies.

Bonus question: "Have you had to call 911 in the past month? What was the situation?" This reveals how they handle real emergencies.

5. "How do you monitor residents who are fall risks or prone to wandering?"

Why this matters: Falls are the leading cause of injury in memory care. Wandering can be life-threatening.

What to look for: Specific monitoring systems, bed alarms, door sensors, and staff protocols. Ask about their fall prevention program and recent incident rates.

Red flag: Generic answers or lack of technology-assisted monitoring.

The Progression and Flexibility Questions

6. "What happens when my loved one's needs increase? Will they have to move again?"

Why this matters: Multiple moves are traumatic for dementia patients. Understanding the facility's capability range prevents future upheaval.

What to explore: Can they handle non-ambulatory residents? Feeding assistance? End-of-life care? What triggers a required move?

Look for: Facilities that can adapt as needs change, rather than requiring moves to different levels of care.

7. "How do you handle dietary restrictions and preferences as the disease progresses?"

Why this matters: Eating difficulties are common in later-stage dementia. Maintaining nutrition and dignity around mealtime is crucial.

What to ask: Can they accommodate texture modifications? How do they handle residents who refuse to eat? What's their approach to feeding assistance?

Red flag: Rigid meal schedules or inability to accommodate individual dietary needs.

The Family Support Questions That Reveal True Character

8. "How do you support family members through this journey?"

Why this matters: Quality memory care facilities understand they're caring for the whole family, not just the resident.

What to look for: Support groups, educational resources, counseling referrals, or family therapy connections. Ask about their communication style and frequency.

At The Magnolia: We will be advocates on behalf of the residents' helping families with their loved ones and care, we have extended visitation hours for family, connect families with local Charlotte support resources, and will host Friday Zoom family sessions for extra connections.

9. "What's your policy on family involvement in daily care decisions?"

Why this matters: Understand how the facilities or homes makes decisions about medication changes, activities, or care plans.

What to explore: How are families informed about changes? Can family members participate in care planning meetings? What decisions require family approval?

Red flag: Facilities that discourage family involvement or make major decisions without consultation.

At The Magnolia: We offer an advocacy program where we help advocate for residents, we are transparent, and families make the best decision for your loved one when working with a physician.

10. "How do you handle holidays, birthdays, and family traditions?"

Why this matters: Maintaining connections to family traditions helps preserve identity and provides comfort.

What to ask: Can families bring special foods? How do they accommodate religious observances? Do they welcome family celebrations?

Look for: Flexibility and willingness to honor individual family traditions rather than generic facility-wide events.

The Financial Transparency Questions

11. "What services are included in the base rate, and what costs extra?"

Why this matters: Charlotte-area memory care costs range from \$4,000-\$15,000+ monthly, but additional fees can add thousands more.

What to clarify: What are costs for Care levels

Red flag: Facilities that can't provide a clear breakdown of included vs. additional services.

At The Magnolia: Unlike other homes, we do not continue to drive up rates, we are all inclusive for all care levels.

The Defining Questions That Separate Exceptional From Average

12. "Can you share references from current families, and may I speak with them?"

Why this matters: Testimonials on websites are curated. Speaking with actual families provides unfiltered insights.

What to ask references: What surprised you? What would you do differently? How does staff handle difficult situations? Would you choose this facility again?

Red flag: Refusal to provide references or only offering scripted testimonials.

13. "What makes you different from other memory care options in Charlotte?"

Why this matters: This reveals the facility's core values and priorities. Generic answers suggest generic care.

Listen for: Specific programs, philosophies, or approaches that address individual needs. Quality facilities can articulate their unique value proposition clearly.

At Magnolia: Our residential assisted living model combines the intimacy of home with professional memory care expertise, serving just 6 residents with 24/7 specialized staff and engagement activities specifically for memory care.

Red Flags That Should End Your Tour Immediately

- **Overpowering odors** (urine, cleaning chemicals, or poor ventilation)
- **Residents left unattended** in common areas for extended periods
- **Staff who seem rushed, stressed, or unfamiliar with residents' names**
- **Locked doors between you and exits** (some security is normal, but excessive restrictions aren't)
- **Pressure to sign immediately** or "limited time offers"
- **Inability to tour during mealtimes** or evening hours
- **Residents who appear over-sedated** or unresponsive

Charlotte-Specific Questions

14. "How do you handle Charlotte's weather extremes and potential power outages?"

Why this matters: Charlotte experiences severe thunderstorms, occasional ice storms, and hurricane effects. Memory care residents are especially vulnerable during emergencies.

15. "Do you have relationships with Charlotte-area specialists and hospitals?"

Why this matters: Established relationships mean faster responses and better coordination of care with facilities like Carolinas Medical Center, Novant Health, or Atrium Health.

How to Use These Questions Effectively

Before your visit:

- Call ahead and ask to speak with the director or head nurse
- Request written materials about policies and procedures
- Ask if you can tour during different times (morning, afternoon, evening)

During your visit:

- Take notes on specific answers
- Observe staff interactions with residents
- Pay attention to the overall atmosphere and resident engagement

After your visit:

- Follow up with additional questions that occurred to you
- Request references and actually call them
- Compare written materials with what you observed

Why These Questions Matter More in Residential Memory Care

Small residential facilities like Magnolia have distinct advantages, but also unique considerations:

Advantages:

- More personalized attention and individualized care
- Consistent staff who know each resident intimately
- Flexible approaches to daily routines and care
- Family-like atmosphere that reduces anxiety

Questions specific to residential care:

- "How do you handle situations when staff call in sick?"
- "What happens if another resident's behavior disrupts the household?"
- "How do you maintain professional boundaries in such an intimate setting?"

The Bottom Line: Trust Your Instincts

After asking these questions, pay attention to your gut feeling. Does the staff seem genuine? Do residents appear content and engaged? Does the facility feel like a place where your loved one could thrive, not just survive?

Remember: The most beautiful facility with impressive amenities means nothing if the fundamental care quality isn't there. The best memory care happens when skilled, compassionate staff provide consistent, personalized attention in a safe, supportive environment.

Making Your Decision

The best time to choose memory care is before you need it. Start your research early, visit multiple facilities, and ask these questions at each one. Take notes, compare answers, and trust the facility that demonstrates both competence and compassion.


At Magnolia Assisted Living & Memory Care, we welcome these questions—and many more. Our residential model thrives on transparency because we know that informed families make the best care partners.

Ready to Ask the Right Questions?

The Magnolia Assisted Living & Memory Care

Opening Q1 (January) 2026 in South Charlotte

Schedule your consultation today:

 **980-497-7834**

 concierge@themagnolianc.com

 www.themagnolianc.com

Currently accepting reservations and providing free consultations for Charlotte-area families. Let's discuss your loved one's unique needs and how our residential memory care model can serve your family.

Share this guide with other families facing memory care decisions. Knowledge shared is dignity preserved.

