

HIRING A HOME CARE AGENCY



If someone is recovering from surgery or needs long-term care for a chronic illness or disability, in-home care may be an option. Home care services range from household support, such as cleaning, cooking and running errands, to skilled care provided by nurses or therapists. There are two types of home care agencies.

- **Non-medical or companion agencies**

Provide non-medical care, are not licensed, and are typically not covered by insurance. Companion or home helper services include keeping the person company and doing light chores like helping with cleaning or picking up prescriptions from the pharmacy. Workers have varying levels of experience and training. Frequently these agencies are small, locally run businesses that are franchises of larger, national companies.

- **Licensed home care agencies**

Typically licensed by the state and can provide skilled nursing and personal care services. Some provide long-term personal care to patients through contracts with Medicaid. Most services, however, are paid for by the patient or the family.

Once you have researched home care agencies in your area and are ready to conduct an interview with a representative from an agency, this worksheet will provide you with sample questions to ask, which in turn will help you find the appropriate caregiver for you and your family member.

When evaluating home care, the first step is to understand the type of help available and what you or your loved one may need for emotional care, household care, personal care and health care.

Topics to Address:

Agency background and policy

Caregiver training and availability

Memory care considerations

Costs

Release from liability: Any selections the individual or family makes in terms of care are the sole responsibility of the decision maker. The Financial Professional, Legg Mason, and The Center for Innovative Care in Aging at the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing are held harmless and released from any liability that may occur from selecting an agency, care center, caregiver, community or facility.

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Agency background and policy

How long has your agency been in existence?

How many caregivers are in your network?

What process do you use to onboard caregivers? Do you interview everyone in person?

Do you perform background checks? Can you share background checks on a specific caregiver upon request? Yes No

What are the procedures for overseeing the hours that a caregiver works and whether or not they have performed their duties?

What licensing or insurance is used to ensure that caregivers are covered?

Is your agency or the caregiver held liable if something were to happen to a client under his/her care? Yes No

Have you had instances in the past year where a caregiver was accused of elder abuse or another form of negligence? Yes No

What do you do with negative feedback you receive from clients about a particular caregiver?

Do you have reviews/comments from clients that you can share about your agency, your caregivers and/or the type of care provided? Yes No

What are the processes in place for communication and staying in touch with me and my family?

How are problems addressed and resolved? Whom can I contact with requests, questions or complaints, and is there someone available to speak to 24 hours a day?

When can services begin?

Caregiver training and availability

When are caregivers available (days, nights, weekends)?

What training or continuing education is required for the caregivers?

How are the caregivers trained to handle emergencies (e.g., fire/outbreak/quarantine)?

What is the protocol for contacting my family should the need arise?

Can I expect to work with a particular caregiver on an ongoing basis? Yes No

Do you have a vacation policy for caregivers? If so, what is the policy? Yes No

How are you staffed to cover caregiver illnesses, emergencies or vacations so that there are no gaps in care?

Are there any limitations on how long a caregiver can stay or work with us? Yes No

Do you allow for a trial period with a caregiver? If so, what is that trial period? Yes No

Do you have a caregiver who can help with the following (list any items that you, your family member or loved one may need help with)? Yes No

Are caregivers asked to provide status updates to your agency and perform periodic check-ins? Yes No

Memory care considerations

Does your agency have experience helping people with Alzheimer's disease, dementia or other cognitive impairment? Yes No

Memory care considerations (continued)

What qualifications are met by caregivers?

What training is provided for caregivers?

Other important questions

Will nutritionists, dietitians, counselors, therapists or other specialists consult with me, as needed? Yes No

Can you provide a copy of any/all legal documents (e.g., a patient's "bill of rights") for review? Yes No

How are shared objects managed to prevent the spread of germs?

Costs

What does the care we discussed cost? What are the hourly, weekly, monthly and annual costs?

What would it cost if we needed care during evenings or weekends?

What would it cost if we needed care overnight?

Are any services charged at an "ad hoc" rate? Do you have a rate sheet or a document that details the costs? Yes No

Do costs vary based on the types of skills needed (e.g., home care vs. skilled nursing)? Yes No

Are any costs covered by insurance, Medicare or Medicaid? Yes No

Would financial assistance be available, if needed? Yes No

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