



HOME CARE: Is This Something You Should Consider?

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ARE YOU CONSIDERING non-medical home care for yourself or a loved one? Does the thought of having a virtual stranger in your home give you an uneasy feeling?

Well...you are not alone. These feelings are real and that is why it is to your advantage to learn about home care and the industry when you are well and don't immediately need the services. You cannot make any important decision without information. If possible, take the time now to gather information rather than sign up for services in the middle of a crisis.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, there are over "40 million senior citizens who have a chronic condition that affects their day-to-day lives, including 12 million who cannot live independently without an in-home caregiver." Many families who are unable to provide care for their loved ones are turning to in-home caregivers for help with personal care, homemaking, companionship and transportation.

What are some of the questions you should ask when interviewing a home care agency for the future or an immediate need?

- Is your agency licensed by the state? What services are you able to

provide according to your license? What can you not do?

- Are caregivers your employees or independent contractors?
- How would you help me decide on the care plan and the hours needed?
- How many caregivers do you have in your agency?
- What kind of training do they receive?
- How do you screen your caregivers? Are they insured?
- Can I meet a caregiver ahead of time prior to having services?
- What if I don't like the caregiver that you send to my home for assistance?
- What are your fees? How do you get paid? Do you have minimums?
- What happens if a caregiver calls out sick or does not show up for the scheduled shift?

How to Have a Successful Relationship with your Home Care Agency

- Get to know the caregiver. You may feel awkward having a stranger in your home, but I am reminded by something my father always used to say, "Even a thin pancake has another side." It is also awkward for the caregiver

Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now. — Alan Lakein

because other than some basic information, they have no idea what they are walking into when they knock on your front door.

- Set the boundaries. Review with your caregiver what they need to know and orient him/her to your home and the areas where they will perform most of their work.
- Have a candid and respectful conversation with the caregiver if she/he is not doing something the way you like it done.
- Have a candid conversation with the agency if the caregiver is not working out to your satisfaction. This will help them make a better match.
- Don't just jump ship and go to another company if you are having a problem with the agency. Do everything possible to have a face to face meeting with the agency scheduler or owner to try and solve the issues. Making a change can be stressful and you want to be certain that you are making the switch for the right reasons.
- Expect excellent and frequent communication. This applies to you and the agency. This is the key to fewer misunderstandings.
- Designate a primary contact. This avoids conflicts if several family members are giving directions to the caregiver or the agency.

- Define your preferred method of communication. This helps to make sure that communications are received and responded to in a timely basis.
- Consider the benefits of a long range plan rather than a quick solution. Everyone wants consistency with the same caregiver. If you have regularly scheduled care, you may want to think longer term. A long-range plan is one that includes developing a team of caregivers so that you know a few in case a caregiver gets sick, moves, etc.
- Be realistic about what to expect. The concept of permission is sometimes important to caregivers. Others will take more initiative. Give the relationship some time to develop. It will take some time for everyone to feel comfortable.

When you decide to interview and work with an agency, it is never an irrevocable decision. You are not committing yourself for the rest of your life. You have every right to make a short term commitment, re-evaluate and then change your original plan. It is your plan and any agency you employ is there to serve your needs. ■



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