

Choosing an In-Home Health Agency – “What to Look for”

In-home agencies (otherwise referred to in the past as Private Duty care), offer a wide range of options for those that wish to remain in their home, such as companion services, personal care, household assistance, and skilled nursing care to meet the specific needs of those involved. In-home agencies will provide a worker to come into the home and provide assistance. Many agencies have a 2-4 hour minimum per visit. Payment may include: Private Pay, Medicaid, Veterans, Long Term Care Insurance and Scholarships.

It is important to ask questions when choosing an in-home health agency not only because the worker will be taking care of your loved one, but also because the worker will be coming into your home or your loved one's home.

What services are typically available?

- ❑ **Mini-bath:** Bathing and personal care by an aide. Generally, they are set up for 1-2 hours of service for a set fee.
- ❑ **Companion** (hired by you): Activities and companionship. May include: housekeeping, meal preparation and minimal personal care. Hourly rate with minimum number of hours required (normally a 4-hour minimum).
- ❑ **Home Health Aide** (hired through an agency): Bathing, personal care, and companionship. May include: housekeeping, meal preparation, or errands. Hourly rate with minimum number of hours required.
- ❑ **L.P.N. and R.N.:** Personal care and skilled service by a licensed nurse. Hourly rate with minimum number of hours required.
- ❑ **Live-in:** Personal care, companionship, meal preparation, housekeeping, and errands. A set fee for a 24-hour period.

These are basic qualifications that all of the In-Home Agencies must meet in order to be listed on the attached listing of In-Home agencies:

The agency MUST:

- ❑ Be willing to provide care for people with dementia.
- ❑ Keep ALL employed caregivers (that provide dementia care) compliant with the Dementia Training Law (which requires dementia training for new employee orientation and on-going caregiver curricula).
- ❑ Provide an initial assessment and a written plan of care for all the direct care workers to follow.
- ❑ Have ALL the direct care workers complete and receive a clean report from the Family Care Safety Registry, prior to their first shift.
- ❑ Maintain general liability and worker's compensation insurance.
- ❑ Have a supervisor available to clients and caregivers whenever services are provided (preferably 24/7).

What are some additional questions to ask when contacting an in-home agency?

- How long has the agency been in business?
- What kind of experience does the agency have with in-home care?
- What services does the agency provide?
- How many references are checked on the direct care worker, prior to them being hired?
- What kind of experience/certification do the aides have to have before they are hired?
- Does the agency provide employee job descriptions in writing for clients?
- Do the aides have reliable transportation?
- How are the workers assigned to families? Will the same worker be coming every time?
- What kind of supervision is given to the workers?
- Who is available if problems arise? What is the procedure for addressing a complaint or problem?
- What happens if the worker calls in sick, is going to be late, or does not show up?
- Is a registered nurse available to staff on a 24-hour basis to handle emergencies?
- Is a list of agency references available for you to check the level of client satisfaction? (Be sure to check these out!)
- If your loved one needs specialized medical care, are employees licensed to perform it?
- Does the agency have a licensed social worker?
- Does the agency offer services to fit individual needs?
- What is the hourly rate for services? Is the rate different for nights and weekends? Is 24-hour care available?
- Does the agency provide a contract for services? Is there a cancellation policy?
- Is the agency Medicare/Medicaid approved? **The Missouri Home Health Consumer Hotline** will investigate complaints on home health and hospice **(800) 877-6485**.
- If you are unhappy with the service you receive, **The Better Business Bureau contact is (314) 645-3300**
- If you feel that the employee from an agency may have caused abuse in some nature, **The Abuse/Neglect Hotline is (800) 392-0210**