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Choosing an Agency for In-Home Care www.AARP.org

General Questions

Is the agency licensed by the state?

Our Answer

Yes. The state agency that licenses our type of services is the Senior & Disabilities Services within the Department of Health and Social Services.

What services does it provide?

PCA, Chore and Respite Services. PCA stands for Personal Care Assistant. These are non-medical services provided to the elderly and disabled in their homes.

Are services available 24 hours a day, seven days a week?

Yes. Each client has an individualized plan to meet their needs 24/7.

Questions about Agency Staffing

What types of staff can the agency provide?

Our Answer

We maintain a work pool of certified CNA's, certified PCA's, PCA's chore and respite workers.

Are staff members bonded (insured against theft or loss to a home) through the agency.

No. We have found stringent oversight and immediate response to client concerns is extremely effective. Whether someone is bonded or not, we don't tolerate staff behavior that may lead to problems down the road. We proactively weed out potential problem employees.

What is the procedure if a staff person does not report to work when scheduled?

A same-day replacement is found. We ask the client if the tardiness is just a one time incident. If the client wants to try a different worker, we happily oblige. We maintain a back-up plan for each client in case the primary worker does not make it.

Can a different staff person be requested if I am unhappy with the worker the agency sent?

Absolutely yes. Our clients peace of mind is our highest priority.

Questions about Costs

What is the cost of services? Is there a sliding fee scale?

Our Answer

We charge the current Medicaid rate.

Is your agency certified to be paid by Medicare and Medicaid?

Yes. We accept Medicaid, insurances and private pay.

How does the agency bill for costs? How often does the agency bill and does it bill Medicaid or the insurance directly?

Yes. We bill directly to Medicaid and insurances. For private pay, we can bill biweekly or monthly.

Questions about Agency Quality

Measuring quality is sometimes hard but usually you know it when you see it. These questions help you gauge the quality of an agency and the care it provides.

Our Answer

In April of 2008 we brought on a new management team. The internal staff was re-trained with the focus of 'maintain the peace of mind of our clients.'

Does the agency have references or satisfaction reports for itself and staff?

Yes. We conduct annual satisfaction surveys with both our clients and PCA's. We have over a 90% satisfaction rating. Anonymity is guaranteed in order to obtain honest results.

Is the agency inspected by an outside organization?

Yes. The State of Alaska uses PERM audits. We spend many hours copying files to the auditors. We also quickly respond to any request for information by Adult Protective Services, Department of Labor and other oversight regulatory agencies.

When was the last inspection?

The last inspection was September 2008.

Are inspection reports available to clients?

Unsure. Please contact the PERM audit manager with the State of Alaska DHSS office.

What kind of system is there for receiving client problems or complaints and resolving them?

*Several- both internal and external.
Internally: the CEO maintains an open door policy. Any client, client family member or worker can go around the staff and get to the CEO directly.
Externally: The Better Business Bureau, Adult Protective Services, Other agencies can be contacted by clients, including: Adult Protective*

Is there a written plan of care for each client? Are clients and family members involved in putting it together or reviewing it?

Yes and yes. Each plan is unique to each client. Private pay clients have 100% control of their plan. Medicaid clients have a state assessor review their status and coordinate the plan. We act as the client's advocate with Medicaid.

Paying for In-Home Care:

There are several ways to pay for in-home care services.

1. Out of your own pocket
2. Through Medicaid, Medicare, or some other public programs
3. Through insurance, such as Medigap, long-term care, or other commercial policies

Your family member can be your worker. Though counter-intuitive, it results in higher quality care. This pay can help offset the financial challenges associated with for a family member.

Outside help paying for in-home care services is limited and usually covers only short-term home health care needs. To be eligible for Medicare or Medicaid payment, an agency must meet certain federal standards and provide skilled nursing services. That means these programs do not pay for personal care or homemaker services alone. To be eligible for coverage under the programs you must be homebound and under a doctor's care.

We can help evaluate your insurance coverage and develop a suitable care plan.