



Questions to Ask In-Home Care Agencies Prior to Contracting for Their Services

By being an educated consumer, you can find a qualified, reputable agency that employs home health aides who will provide care with compassion and skill for your loved one. Below are some questions to ask before you hire someone for this position:

Services:

1. Number one on the list is to go through a well-known agency. This does not necessarily mean a large franchise. Get references and be sure to compose a list of questions for them when you call. Arizona does not license non-medical in home care agencies, but you can ask if they are a member of the Arizona In Home Care Association (AZNHA).
2. Is the agency locally owned and operated? How long have they been in business?
3. Is the agency an independent, locally owned business or is it a franchise?
4. What is the difference between a home health agency and a non-medical home care agency?
5. How are the agencies' caregivers supervised to ensure proper care is being provided? Does the agency have someone available 24/7 in case of emergency?

Staff:

6. What recruiting methods does the agency use? How are they finding caregivers? Newspaper ads? Staff agencies? Craig's List?
7. Are their caregivers W-2 employees or do they contract people to provide care. (AZNHA currently requires that all caregivers be W-2 employees.)
8. What are their hiring requirements for prospective employees? Do they ask about prior experience? Are employees required to be available for certain shift lengths?
9. Are the caregivers tested for TB annually? (This is an AZNHA requirement)
10. Are all caregivers drug tested before hiring and does the company perform random drug tests after hire?
11. What screenings are performed before hiring? Criminal background checks, federal or state?
12. How many families does the agency serve? And how many caregivers to they employ? Are they adequately staffed to meet your caregiving needs?
13. How does the agency assess each caregiver's capabilities? What is their proficiency level in basic care, their strengths, weaknesses? Their individual interests also play a role in finding a good fit for clients.
14. Does the agency provide training? What does that training entail? Are they knowledgeable about elderly health conditions and certified in CPR and First Aid? What other certifications do they have?

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15. Does the agency allow you and your loved one to meet the caregiver prior to service being provided? And, if you are not satisfied with a particular caregiver, will the agency provide a replacement?

Costs

16. Does the agency provide a written service agreement that provides a clear and concise explanation of all fees, cancellation policies, and other charges?
17. What do your services cost and what does that include?
18. Do you require a minimum number of hours per visit?
19. What is your cancellation policy?
20. Will I be charged for caregiver drive time and for supervisory visits?
21. Does your agency accept Medicare/AHCCCS/ALTCS clients?
22. Will your agency accept payments from my Long Term Care Insurance plan?
23. When did your agency last increase its' costs and by how much?
24. How often does your agency bill for charges? Do you bill Medicare or the insurance company directly?

Quality

25. Is the agency diligent about sending the same person to the home, rather than a revolving door of strangers? (Keep in mind there are benefits to having two primary in-home aides to establish a relationship, so that if one moves on, there is another familiar with the family and their routine.)
26. Does the agency evaluate the quality of the care provided on a regular basis? How frequently? Who conducts the evaluation?
27. Does the agency allow their caregivers to drive clients to medical and/or other appointments, the grocery store, etc.? And does the agency ensure the caregiver has a current and valid drivers' license?
28. Does the agency have a client problem resolution or complaint process that promptly addresses and resolves problems, issues or conflicts in a timely manner and in a professional manner?
29. How does the agency track arrival and departure times from a client's home? Do the caregivers maintain a log of their activities while providing care? Is this information available to the client and their family?
30. How often do your staff communicate with family members and by what means (written report, phone call, etc.)?

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