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Help with Home Care

Most people want to remain in their own homes as long as possible, but age, infirmity, or illness can make this a difficult task. Home care workers can provide an important intermediate step between total independence and the need to move into a care facility. If you have a family member who lives at home but needs help with a few daily activities, there are a variety of agencies and workers that can provide different levels of service.

- Home health nurses, therapists, or aides provide in-home medical care including medication assistance, exercises, wound care, and monitoring of conditions.
- A housekeeper or chore worker performs basic household tasks and light cleaning.
- A homemaker or personal care worker provides personal care, assistance with medication, meal planning, and household management.
- A companion or live-in provides personal care, light housework, exercise, companionship, and medication reminders. These aides usually work for lower salaries in exchange for room and board.
- A geriatric care manager is the ideal solution for any and all needs, especially in long-distance caregiving situations. A care manager not only provides continuous assessment but also arranges and monitors services provided.

Home Health Agencies

While it's possible to hire home care workers on your own-ads in the newspaper are one common method-home health agencies can greatly reduce your time and effort. Not only do they have a ready supply of workers to suit most situations, they maintain a level of professionalism by ensuring employee certifications and licenses are current. Also, they're obligated to provide solutions to any problems that may arise.

When deciding on a home health agency, the United States Administration on Aging recommends asking the following questions:

- What type of employee screening is done?
- Who is responsible for paying the worker?
- Who supervises the worker?
- What types of general and specialized training have workers received?
- Who do you call if the worker doesn't show up?

- What are the fees and what do they cover?
- Is there a sliding fee scale?
- What are the minimum and maximum hours of service?
- Are there limitations in terms of tasks performed or times of day when services are furnished?
- Are there extra fees for care provided during weekends and holidays?

Above all, make sure that everyone is comfortable with the person you hire. Since the home care worker will be involved in many aspects of day-to-day life, an atmosphere of respect and trust is important if the relationship is going to succeed.

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