

Home Care Alliance of
Massachusetts
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Northwestern U. Releases Questionable Report on Private Pay Home Care *Home Care Alliance Responds to Negative Generalizations*

Boston, MA – A new report by Northwestern University titled “Hiring and Screening Practices of Agencies Supplying Paid Caregivers to Older Adults” published recently in the *Journal of the American Geriatrics Society* took issue with the hiring, training, and supervisory practices among home care agencies providing privately paid care to mostly elders and their families.

The report looked at practices in seven states (not including Massachusetts) to draw some very broad conclusions about the quality of in-home supportive care, going so far as to suggest that families may be given a false sense of security or even misled about the background and skill set of the caregivers coming into their homes.

The Home Care Alliance of Massachusetts fully agrees that consumers need to comparison shop when buying home care services for themselves or a family member, but we take exception to assertions that most aides are not properly screened or trained. We also believe that the article’s authors failed to distinguish between different models of private home care that consumers can choose from.

In the private home care marketplace, families can choose from two very distinct models. There is the **registry** model, in which a company charges a finder’s fee to place a caregiver in a home. Under this model, the client/family pays the caregiver directly and provides the majority of the supervision themselves. The family may also be responsible for liability insurance. In an **agency** model, the caregivers are employees of an agency, and trained and supervised by agency managers. The agency model generally offers closer supervision, back-up if a caregiver is unable to work, and handles all insurance and payroll taxes.

The Home Care Alliance of Massachusetts is proud to represent over 100 private care agencies, all of whom employ, train, insure and supervise their own workers. Our member agencies have a commitment to safe and quality private duty home care for families, and believe that educated clients are their best customers. Our free annual “*Guide to Private Home Care Services*” offers a number of helpful tips to help families make informed choices, including a checklist of important questions to ask any agency.

In 2010, the Home Care Alliance of Massachusetts created our own Home Care Agency Accreditation program to address the type of concerns raised by the Northwestern University study. The fifteen standards in the Alliance’s Accreditation program include requirements for extensive criminal history and other background checks for prospective caregiver employees, minimum training and orientation requirements, competency testing, and standards for both emergency supervision and periodic quality review supervision. Over 60 agencies in Massachusetts have been approved for Accreditation. In addition, all agency members of the

Alliance agree to adhere to our Code of Business ethics, which includes sections on Client/Patient Rights, Quality Standards, and Business Practices.

We agree with the Northwestern University researchers that it is important for home care consumers to be knowledgeable and diligent in hiring a quality agency. Families looking for quality home care should feel assured that have a choice of highly qualified agencies and they can have peace of mind that their loved one is in good, trained, trustworthy and compassionate hands.

Information about ordering a free copy of the “*Guide to Private Home Care Services*,” the Code of Business Ethics for Massachusetts homecare agencies and details about our Home Care Agency Accreditation program – including a list of accredited agencies – is available on the Alliance’s website at www.thinkhomecare.org.

About the Home Care Alliance:

With a mission to unite people and organizations to advance community health through care and services in the home, the Home Care Alliance of Massachusetts is a non-profit trade association and advocacy group providing representation, education, communication, advocacy and – ultimately – a voice for the state’s home health industry. Founded in 1969, the Alliance represents nearly 200 home care and home health agencies. For more information, visit www.thinkhomecare.org.

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