

Healthcare Spotlight

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Hiring the Right Home Care Agency

by **NANCY WEBRE MS** of Evergreen In-Home Care Services

Making the decision to hire an in-home care agency to provide care for your loved one is an important decision and can, at the same time be very difficult. Home care is a broad range of professional/non-professional health care and support services provided in people's homes. People who are recovering from an illness or accident, disabled, chronically or terminally ill, most often use these services.

Typically home care is appropriate when a person can safely stay at home but still needs ongoing care that cannot easily or effectively be provided solely by family and friends. In a lot of cases either a hospital discharge planner or the client's family physician will help determine the extent of care needed and provide referrals to resources available. Most in-home care agencies will have a Registered Nurse on staff and/or a staff member that is certified as a geriatric case manager that can conduct an assessment on needs of the client as well.

Each home care situation is unique. In the beginning, family or friends may step in to help with simple tasks and support for aging seniors who want to stay in their homes. As long term care

needs progress, more time is required to manage those needs. Physical and mental conditions change with aging making routine hygiene and daily activities of living difficult for an aging individual. Even with the healthiest of seniors, the ability to drive a car, shop for groceries or do general housekeeping eventually needs to be relinquished to the responsibility of another person.

Before starting your search for an in-home care agency, determine what the care needs are and how much time each week will be required for assistance from the company. Most home care companies will conduct an assessment at no charge to help you determine care needs and develop a specific care plan for the client. Once the decision has been made to have in-home care services provide the next question is how does one decide how to choose an agency.

Following is a checklist provided by the National Association for Home Care and Hospice (www.nahc.org/home) that can provide some guidance when choosing an in-home care agency.



Nancy Webre, MS

How long has the in-home care agency been serving the community?

Does the in-home care agency supply literature explaining its services, eligibility requirements and fees? The State of Oregon requires that the agency provides their client with a detailed "Patient Bill of Rights" that outlines rights and responsibilities of the providers, clients and family

caregivers alike.

How does the in-home care agency select and train its employees? Do they protect their workers with written personnel policies and workman's compensation? Do they protect their clients from theft or abusing by bonding their employees?

Does the in-home care agency assign supervisors to oversee the quality of care clients are receiving in their homes? If so, how often do these individuals make visits? Who can the client contact or their family members contact with questions or complaints?

How does the agency follow up on and resolve complaints?

What are the financial procedures of the in-home care agency? Does the agency furnish written statements explaining all of the costs and payment options associated with home care?

What procedures does the in-home care agency have in place to handle emergencies?

How does the in-home care agency ensure client confidentiality?

In addition, if an in-home care agency has not been previously recommended to you, ask the company for a list of previous clients to provide you with a reference.

Following this checklist can help you determine the quality of in-home care services provided by the specific agency. All in-home care agencies must be licensed by State of Oregon. This licensure assures that agencies adhere and meet specific criteria to ensure that high standards of quality care are provided.

Nancy Webre MS is owner/CEO of Evergreen In-Home Care Services, 541-389-0006, www.evergreeninhome.com.

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Keep Your Eyes Safe This Summer

by **DR. KIRSTEN SCOTT, OD**

Most Americans know the importance of UV blocking sunscreen to protect their skin from aging and diseases. Unfortunately, according

to further protect eyes and help prevent premature aging.





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Care for loved ones.
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