

Tips for Hiring a Caregiver

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There may come a time, due to physical, mental or safety reasons, when you may have to open your home to a stranger to assist you or to care for a loved one. A good caregiver can provide much needed and welcomed support. To make the hiring process less daunting, here are some helpful tips to ensure the caregiver is qualified as well as a good fit for your particular need.

Consider how you will find the right caregiver. You may hire a caregiver directly, or you may consider using a placement or staffing agency. A third option would be to use a homecare agency that directly employs the caregiver.

Should you decide to hire directly or use a placement or staffing agency, the caregiver becomes your employee, and you will be responsible for withholding taxes, as well as payments for workman's compensation, disability and unemployment insurance. All of these payments should be considered when assessing the total cost of the caregiver. Be sure to check with your homeowner's insurance provider to see if they can assist with providing this coverage. An accountant or bill paying service may be able to assist with these items for a fee.

If you decide to hire through a homecare agency that employs caregivers, that agency will be responsible for the taxes and payments mentioned above. In addition, that agency, unlike a placement or staffing agency, will provide ongoing support, training and supervision.

Quality and safety are the most important items to consider, so cost of care, even if it is a primary concern, should not be the only determining factor. To ensure all your concerns are considered, have a list of questions ready such as cost, training, and minimum/maximum hours required. For home care agencies, also ask about support/supervision provided for the caregiver. Be sure to ask for references. Read reviews, if they are available.

If you plan to hire on your own then a personal recommendation is the best way to find a caregiver. Carefully check references; insist on the caregiver completing a national background check for possible criminal history, provide driving records (if driving is required by the job), proof of insurance if they are driving their own car, and submit to drug testing.

Regardless of how you hire, insist on meeting the potential caregiver prior to commencing care. In addition, there should be a written agreement between the parties to assure that expectations are met. This protects the private caregiver or agency as well establishes expected payment. If a homecare agency is used, it should provide that agreement. You may also want to consider the services of an Elder Law attorney to create or review an agreement.

Prepare a written care plan or daily duty list for the caregiver. Make sure any list is in an obvious visual place within the residence. The first few days and weeks are critical to establishing good habits and expectations. Review the care plan with the caregiver, observe the care, note areas of deficiency and be sure to communicate with the caregiver any changes necessary. If you are not getting what you are paying for in a worker, you have the right to fire the caregiver.

In a care relationship, other items pertinent to the case will need to be identified and addressed. Examples are cash exchanges between the client and caregiver, bank accounts accessibility and an inventory of the valuables that may be in the home. A method for reimbursement for items purchased should be established.

Family members, friends or others should make unannounced visits to assess the relationship between the caregiver and person as well as the quality of the care. It is a good practice to let the caregiver know that others are attentive to their loved one and the situation.