



Background Screening the Senior Caregiver

Many families privately hire senior caregivers in an effort to control costs and have more control over caregiver selection. When you do this you accept responsibility for thorough background screening of your selected candidate. Here are some best practices for background screening the senior caregiver.

1. Verify applicant caregiver's identity

Always require that the applicant show you original documents to prove his/her identity (driver's license, passport, college ID card, etc.) at the job interview. At least one should be a photo ID. Do not accept photocopies, as these can disguise alterations.

2. Require an application

A formal job application should include the candidate's name, address, all phone numbers, and a chronological job and educational history. We share our [senior caregiver job application form](#) free of charge. Confirm name and address provided on the application agree with the photo ID.

3. Require references

Character and employment references should not be friends and family of the applicant. As a best practice, we encourage you to contact former agencies to whom the caregiver has worked or the family member who supervised the caregiver.

Red Flag: If candidate cannot or will not provide non-related or former agencies' references. It is rare that a senior caregiver has not enrolled in an agency at least once, due to the nature of the business.

4. Interview carefully

Let the candidate speak and sit back and listen! The biggest mistake inexperienced interviewers make is talking more about the position, selling it, rather than letting the applicant speak and sell himself. Behavioral interviewing is a best practice. Ask the candidate to relate to a particular situation and describe their reaction. For example, "Tell me about a time when you had to deal with a confused senior. What did you do? How did you handle?" Evaluate the candidate's experiences and responses against your requirements.

5. Check references

Personally speak to all references. Verify how the applicant behaved, and the services provided. Ask open ended questions and wait for answers. Avoid giving verbal clues of agreement (umhum) or disagreement (really?).

When talking to a personal reference, try to obtain a third party or 'wild card' reference. This could be another family the care giver worked for, known by both the reference and the candidate whom you may use as an additional reference. Third party references are invaluable, as they have most likely not been cherry-picked by the candidate and have not been briefed on the reference check ahead of time.

6. Schedule a second, working interview

This is the time when the caregiver becomes better acquainted with the senior/adult with disabilities needing care and supervision. Allow them to get to know each other and see if they are a good match. If the senior, for example, likes to play cards or do puzzles, make sure the caregiver is willing and able to do so. Pay the applicant for his/her time.

7. Evaluate logistics

For the live-in caregiver, do the accommodations meet with her expectations? For the live-out applicant, does she have a reasonable, reliable means of transportation to your home daily? It is best if she is not relying on a friend or family member to get to and from work! You count on the caregiver to be on time for you – everyday!

8. Obtain consent to perform a background check

The candidate's signed consent must be provided to order the pre-employment background check. The firm conducting the background check will have a document available for your use. HomeWork Solutions encourage families to purchase the criminal background check from [NannyVerify.com](https://www.NannyVerify.com).

Red Flag: If the candidate refuses to sign the consent or provide his/her SSN, DMV license number and/or date of birth, move on immediately.

9. Begin the background check with an SSN trace

An SSN trace will provide all names and addresses associated with this Social Security Number over the last seven years as known to the credit bureaus. This is NOT a credit check, but relies on header file information from the credit bureaus, created by such actions as applying for a car loan, rental application, open a utility account, insurance application, cell phone service application and other related activities. Services such as [NannyVerify.com](https://www.NannyVerify.com) make these checks easily available. You should also validate the data in the SSN trace with the chronology of the candidate's experiences you have already established.

10. Finalize background checking

Best practices are to search criminal records under all names and in all jurisdictions as reported on the SSN trace. Consider including Driver's License History, sex offender registry and National Criminal Records Locator (a database) checks.

A word to the wise - be very wary of 'instant' background checking services, the online services that let you check out your neighbor or a boyfriend's history. These rely on compiled databases, do not cover all jurisdictions, generally do not include misdemeanor offenses, and are by definition, out of date the day they are published. Court systems charge for database dumps, and with more than 3,000 jurisdictions across the country, it is economically unfeasible for the databases to update any more frequently than semi-annually or annually.

WARNING! Detecting Fake References

The applicant may arrange with a relative or friend to pose as a former boss. The applicant provides phone numbers or other contact information, and when the hiring family contacts this person, s/he receives a glowing report about the applicant. How can this be detected?

Fake references have been briefed by the applicant, but they are typically not very good at their job. Change minor details of the applicant's story when talking to references and expect to be corrected. You might change details of the job for example. (Q: Your mom was the woman with dementia, right? A: No, Mary cared for my dad after his stroke.) If the reference doesn't tell a story that agrees with the applicant's, this is a huge red flag.