



Senior Services Plus Urges Seniors To Ask About Homecare Agencies Hiring Practices

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There are many homecare agencies that provide homecare services and as the aging population grows and lives longer the need for assistance in one's home will also grow. Picking a homecare company to assist you or a loved one in your home should include asking certain questions.

"You need to know who is coming into your home to provide homecare services so that you can be sure your loved ones are looked after in an appropriate and professional manner," advises Jonathan Becker, Executive Director for Senior Services Plus. " Don't be fooled by websites or referral agencies on the internet, there is a process you should go through to interview homemaker assistants."

Here are just a few questions that should be asked to get the best possible homecare worker for your loved one:

- * How long has homecare agency been in business?
- * Are they licensed and insured?
- * Does the agency meet with the potential client before services start?
- * Is the agency available during non business hours?
- * And an absolute must is, What are your hiring practices? Some homecare service agencies may not follow state requirements that exclude applicants who are convicted felons. Other agencies do not require drug screenings.

SSP was notified recently that they are the only homemaker agency in the metro east region that does pre-employment and random drug screenings for all of their homemaker staff. SSP thoroughly reviews and screens every homecare applicant they process for employment. Despite the fact that SSP is not reimbursed for their practice of pre-employment drug screening, random drug screening, reference checks, and training

that go beyond the State of Illinois requirements for all of their employees regardless of cost.

SSP feels strongly that they have a responsibility to take every precaution and safeguard in pre-screening their Homemakers before they are trained and sent into a seniors' home to provide those crucial in-home services. SSP feels that this cost is minor when you consider the potential danger of placing a staff person in someone's home that may be under the influence of drugs or is a convicted felon. SSP believes that they are not just hiring an employee they are hiring a friend, caregiver, companion, and someone you can trust.

As one SSP client says, "I just felt I had to let you know what a good job Sarah is doing for me. With two broken hips, she has been my second hand. She keeps my apartment spotless and clean, and gets me to my doctors on a timely basis. She's not afraid of work and goes the extra mile. I'm truly glad I'm her client."

Theresa Collins, SSP's Homecare Director, recommends that an individual or family member seeking homecare services through an agency should ask lots of questions and before they hire an individual on their own they should consider these same critical requirements. Following these guidelines will help ensure the safety of the senior and prove that the individual has the required skills to do the job you or your loved one needs. This is especially vital as 40% of the seniors we serve do not have family living in the immediate area and are dependent on the internet and phone conversations to manage their loved ones care. SSP's homecare program wants to ensure that an individual can stay independent in their home as long as possible. Taking that extra step in asking questions may save some heartache and avoid problems down the road.

For over 41 years Senior Services Plus has offered a variety of activities, events, programming, and resources for older adults. If you have any questions regarding hiring practices or state guidelines please contact Theresa Collins at Senior Services Plus (618) 465-3298.



