



Press Release

For Immediate Release
07/17/07

For More Information
EILEEN DOHERTY, MS
Executive Director
303-333-3482

Home Care

Denver, Co. Most seniors anticipate staying home if they need help in the later years. Individuals find themselves needing assistance with household chores such as laundry, shopping and bathing. Sometimes individuals also need assistance with wound care, diabetic monitoring or medication administration. Following a hospital and/or nursing home stay, some individuals may also need physical, occupational or speech therapy if they suffer from a broken hip or a stroke.

In Colorado, individuals can receive home care through Medicare, Medicaid, Home and Community Based Care, Home Care Allowance, and Consumer Directed Attendant Support Care, and/or HCBS Consumer Directed Care for the Elderly. Home care companies that offer Medicare and/or Medicaid services are state certified. To qualify for any of these programs individuals must meet medical and/or income guidelines.

But many individuals need assistance in the home that is not deemed medically necessary through Medicare and/or Medicaid or they do not meet the financial requirements for the programs. Still in need of care, these individuals look to the private sector for home care services.

In Colorado, many home care companies offer laundry services, bathing assistance, dressing assistance, shopping assistance, meal preparation, medication reminders, escort services, and transportation services which are not covered by Medicare and/or Medicaid. Under current Colorado law, home care companies are not required to be licensed or certified to offer these private services.

Private, home care services usually follow two models. In one model the home care agency employs the personal care providers and staff; and in the other model, the home care agency acts as a broker by identifying personal care providers and other staff who are employed by the senior and/or the family, with the company receiving a fee for the brokerage service.

However, under both of these models, training for staff varies, depending on the company. Some companies have very extensive programs with classroom and on-the-job certifications; while others may not have any formal training program. Some

companies use a nurse to supervise the care that is provided, while others do not offer that service.

Marketing materials may indicate the company carries liability insurance and that staff are bonded, but policies may not be in force. The company may or may not conduct CBI/ FBI or fingerprint checks to determine if the individual has a previous criminal or civil record. Home care companies that offer transportation services may or may not confirm if the individual providing transportation has a valid driver's license. Some companies use private vehicles to provide transportation and escort services without verification that the minimum state insurance requirements are in force.

Rates are often not published, thus older adults and families may not be able to do comparison shopping for services. Some companies require staff to sign a non-compete clause, while others do not have this requirement.

Families may like the services of a personal care provider and enter into a personal agreement with the staff person outside of the oversight and supervision of the home care company. As an employer, the individual may unknowingly incur payroll tax expenses, worker's compensation, and other state and federal tax obligations, in addition to the need for supervision and oversight.

Numerous checklists exist to help seniors and their families select home care companies. Families often have good experiences with a personal care provider; while others find themselves changing home care companies numerous times to get their needs met. Although licensure and/or certification may not improve quality and create highly qualified workforce, it does create a minimum standard, especially to protect vulnerable seniors who need assistance to continue to live in their own home.

Older adults and their families, who want to share their experiences with home care agencies, can write or call 303-333-3482.

Eileen Doherty, MS is the Executive Director of Senior Answers and Services and the Colorado Gerontological Society, 3006 East Colfax, Denver CO 80206. She has more than 30 years of experience in education and training, clinical practice, research, and public policy in gerontology. You may reach her at 303-333-3482 or Doherty001@att.net.