A Smart Way to Evaluate Home Care Agencies by Kaycee Bishop

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With the numerous options for home care agencies, families are often confronted with the difficulty of choosing the proper place for care for their loved ones. Most of them do not have an idea of what to look for and what to ask during their visits. Here are some ways that can guide families in searching and evaluating proper home care setting.

First, it is important to be familiar with the various services under this setting. A common misconception is that it only includes medical or skilled care for patients who have long term care needs such as those who have chronic illnesses or disabling conditions, and those recovering from serious accidents or surgery. But as a matter of fact, it also covers household chores support such as cooking, cleaning, paying bills, doing groceries, and running other errands.

Some home care providers are Medicare certified and gives reimbursement for members. A 2008 survey from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, it showed that most home health patients suffered from conditions and diseases of the circulatory system. Half of these patients are composed of patients with heart disease particularly congestive heart failure. As for the other home care patients, diagnoses include metabolic diseases, immunity disorders, and muscolo-skeletal system diseases to name a few.

Searching for Home Care Agencies

Just like what you do before buying a car, an appliance or a gadget, it is important to read feedbacks and reviews first. While searching and later deciding on a home care provider, be sure that you did your homework and researched on this type of care setting and also probed on both the positive and the negative feedbacks on your preferred choice.

Get all the necessary information first. Knowing the right questions to ask can help you get the right answers and guide you in your selection. Here is a list of the important things you have to inquire about.

1. Know if the agency has a license or is reviewed by your stateâ€™s health department. This is important because it can help you ensure the quality and reliability of the providerâ€™s services.

2. Ask if they are certified by Medicare to conform to the federal requirements for health and safety. Their answer should be a yes. Once they say no, try to know why.

3. Inquire about their employees. How do they screen and hire caregivers? Know if they have the right, skilled, and qualified people to provide the services that your loved one requires. Is the agency willing to give references?

4. Related to the first inquiry, try to know too if the agency you are deciding on is accredited by a governing agency or an independent group that performs evaluations and accreditations of health care agencies and programs. If yes, ask about their scores or levels. Similarly, ask for a follow up if they have their own quality improvement program.

Comparing Home Care Providers

For a quick and convenient way to get reviews, you can inquire at your stateâ€™s health department or visit the websites of groups doing evaluation of nursing homes and home health agencies and try to

see how your chosen agency fared in the evaluation. Also, you can ask for that information directly from that agency. They should be ready to provide what you need since the health care reform law requires them to be transparent about their quality measures. Additionally, the Medicare website also provides a quick link to home care agencies comparison.

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