

Action Plan for Hiring In-Home Caregivers

First and foremost, you want someone who is able to perform all the caregiving tasks you need accomplished. You also want someone who can form a comfortable working relationship with both you and the person with Parkinson's. Take your time and select carefully.

- » **Define your loved one's and your caregiving needs.** Do you need help with bathing and respite care a couple times a week? Do you need someone available eight hours every night to help the person with Parkinson's to the bathroom and supervise him or her so you can get uninterrupted sleep?
- » **Develop a job description.** Include a list of household tasks, personal care tasks and leisure activities that the home care worker will be expected to do. A well-developed job description will help you or an agency assure that the right worker is hired. It can also be used as a basis to evaluate the worker and, if necessary, terminate employment.
- » **Find out about legal, financial and tax issues.** Check with your insurance agent to determine whether your homeowner's policy covers property damage, theft and personal injury that involves an employee or other person working in the home. Does your automobile insurance cover a home care worker driving the family car, and if so, are there any exceptions? Read "Deciding to Hire Through an Agency or Privately" on page 92 for more in-depth information on legal and tax issues.
- » **Screen and interview applicants.** If you are hiring privately, you will first want to interview candidates by phone, then set up in-person interviews with the most promising ones. Have the job description ready to hand them and a formal list of questions. Remember to include any individual preferences or behaviors that might preclude certain work, such as "this is a smoking household," "my loved one will not accept personal care from a man/woman," "the person with Parkinson's often swears," etc. If you are hiring from an agency, you may only be presented with one candidate at a time. Presumably the agency has used the information you provided in their care planning interview to pick the best match for your needs. If you truly do not think this person will fit into your household, tell the agency, and ask them to send someone else.

- » **Check references and backgrounds.** Whether hiring an agency to provide your home care worker or hiring privately, it is vital that you ask for at least two references. Check them! The agency should have done a criminal background check on their employees, but you will need to do one if you hire privately.
- » **Sign a contract or care provider agreement.** If you are using an agency, they will supply a contract that shows what services have been contracted, what rate will be charged, any charges for additional services and billing and payment information. If you hire privately, you should have a written agreement that specifically outlines the terms of employment including salary, days and hours of service, any benefits (e.g., paid holidays, provision of meals, etc.), work rules and notice required for either party to terminate the agreement. Both parties to any contract or agreement should be given a copy for their records.
- » **If you decide to hire someone privately, you can place an ad in your local paper or search online.** There are many websites that specialize in providing care services, from companion care to personal care to around-the-clock care. You might also look for a placement agency. These companies charge a one-time finder's fee for placing a caregiver in a home. The caregivers are often from other countries and may have limited English proficiency. Whichever option you choose, you should make sure the person is legally able to work in the U.S.

The worksheets "Questions to Ask a Potential Paid Agency and Individual Caregiver" on pages 110 and 112 can help you select either an agency or individual.