

What is Professional In-Home Care?

When attempting to explain what exactly **professional in-home care** is, perhaps the best way to start is to mention what it is **NOT**.

There are those seeking information regarding senior care who are simply unaware of the options available to them because they have never been in need of in-home care before; as a result, a common assumption is to seek out a caregiver on your own in order to save time or money. However, what is of utmost importance to understand, is that when seniors or loved ones acting on their behalf hire caregivers privately (or even through a referral source), they themselves become the employer of record and assume all legal and financial responsibilities, including taxes and insurance that covers all manner of liability. They are also tasked with the process of interviewing and vetting caregiver candidates, including performing background checks, making sure they are legal to work in the U.S., negotiating wages.

When hiring private caregivers, you are not guaranteed that the individual coming into your home is actually qualified in all areas of need and truly willing or able to provide the services you desire. The highly potential outcome includes, but is not limited to:

- poor quality of care
- inconsistent care
- no backup personnel available when the caregiver is unable to come to work as scheduled
- difficulties matching personality types
- added stress to the senior or loved ones responsible for them
- legal ramifications

A professional in-home care agency mitigates risk, and is dedicated to providing much higher quality of care for the seniors, and support for their families as well.

(CAN INCLUDE SCHEMATIC HERE OR AT THE END OF THE ARTICLE)

What does a professional in-home care agency do?

A quality, professional in-home care agency seeks certification by a reputable regulatory organization such as the California Association for Health Services at Home, and is registered with an A+ rating on the Better Business Bureau. They believe that building a reputation that their clients can trust is imperative, and only hire caregivers who are professional, trained, caring and compatible for their seniors. Their focus is to provide senior care services that will help their elderly clients retain their independence and familiar lifestyles by continuing to live in their own homes, ultimately allowing them to sustain a better quality of life.

Administrative Management:

A professional in-home care company is a business, and conducts itself as such. It has an experienced, professional administrative leadership, and a solid infrastructure in place to effectively screen and hire, train, manage, and support their employees who are the caregivers. This agency is able to:

- conduct background checks, interview references, verify legal status, and work experience, collect fingerprints and access driving records
- coordinate all schedules and fluctuations within them
- match caregivers with the elderly clients
- supervise their employees
- place requirements on their employees to receive training for the various needs specific to seniors, and/or offer training programs in-house
- assume all legal and financial responsibilities related to managing caregivers

For more in depth information, see our article on “The Continuum of Care, part 5 – Areas of Administration & Management”. (Can provide link when that article is completed)

Senior Patient Care and After-care:

Many seniors seeking in-home care require assistance with “activities of daily living” (ADL). These can include meeting their basic needs such as providing companionship, light housekeeping, meal preparation, running errands, giving medication reminders, and transportation to personal, social or medical appointments. Some elderly clients need a somewhat higher level of attention due to more serious health conditions or advanced age. Professional in-home care providers are trained to attend to bathing and grooming, assisting in mobility, keeping the home environment safe, helping the senior follow doctor’s orders, and accompanying them to medical appointments to be a support, and ensure the senior patient or their family members receive and understand information delivered from the healthcare professional. They are that extra set of eyes and ears to provide peace of mind that pertinent news or progress reports will not be missed.

On the flip-side, professional in-home care agencies also provide support to the healthcare professionals such as physicians, discharge nurses and therapists, by having a trained professional available at appointments with the senior to receive after-care instructions, monitor patient progress, and interface with responsible family members. When a healthcare professional can be assured that his/her patient has a support system in place, as is the case with a caregiver at their side, there is less risk for mistakes in after-care for that senior patient. Physicians, for example, can convey treatment and prescription requirements directly to the caregiver and the patient, which provides reassurance that the senior will be able to follow orders, get her medications, schedule follow-up appointments, and make it to physical therapy if necessary. When the patient is able to take care of herself properly (with the assistance from her caregiver), this equates to better quality of health and recovery, which in-turn means less potential for return visits for the similar injuries or conditions, and lower readmission rates to hospitals.

For more details, see “What Needs to Be Done to Provide Care”, part 3 of The Continuum of Care. (Can provide link when that article is completed)

Beneficial Impact on Patient Wellness:

When family members are obligated to care for a senior relative, or hire someone privately who may not be fully qualified, the results can negatively impact all involved. The senior’s needs can create such a demand on the time for the relative, that he or she is completely overwhelmed trying to accomplish everything. Too often, we see the case of an adult daughter, for example, with her own

children at home, a full-time job, and various other responsibilities, suddenly encumbered with caring for her elderly parent. Her choices become to: bring the senior parent into her own home, try to care for the parent in their own home, hire a caregiver to help, or place the parent in an assisted living situation. The dynamics of the relationship between adult child and parent shift dramatically in these scenarios, where the parent is now dependent upon the child, and emotional stress ensues. Of course, most often, the senior prefers to remain in their own home. The best option then for the adult child, is to seek the assistance of a professional in-home care agency.

The agency can provide an assessment to determine the level of care and how often it would be needed. Seniors do not like to give up on their independence, but having a qualified third party involved often helps the senior make the transition and come to terms with the fact that they do need help. With a professional caregiver to lean on, families can focus on quality time together, and reduce the stress on both sides. Less stress means less of a strain on the senior's health.

A well-matched caregiver serves as a companion and a confidant able to provide continuous social interaction for the elderly client. The caregiver can help them maintain a social life outside of the home by escorting them to events, visits with friends, a trip to the movies, or other social engagements. He or she can ensure that the senior gets the social and mental stimulation necessary to keep them active, thereby boosting their emotional wellness.

Some seniors have physical or dietary restrictions but have treatment requirements from a physician or physical therapist. With a qualified caregiver on hand, the senior can be assured to receive medication reminders, be transported to health-related appointments, follow a specific diet, or receive assistance on walks or exercise regimens. If a senior suffers from dementia, diabetes, or other serious conditions, the family and senior can experience much relief by having a professional caregiver devoted to their senior who is trained in these specific areas. Consequently, often the senior's physical wellness improves, or at the very least, they are able to remain living independently much longer.

Professional in-home care agencies are designed to take into consideration the needs of seniors who want to remain living at home for as long as possible, as well as the responsibilities that fall on family members charged with caring for them. Their goal is to not only provide a qualified caregiver, but to provide a care solution that allows their clients to maintain prolonged independence and a better quality of life.