



Family Caregivers of British Columbia

Hiring a Healthcare Provider

Recognizing the need to get outside help with caregiving or assistance around the home is a difficult step. Once you realize that family, friends or volunteers cannot provide the level or continuity of care needed it is time to explore other options.

The first step for most individuals or families is to contact Vancouver Island Health Authority for a Long Term Care Assessment. Depending on your income level and need you may be eligible for services subsidized by the government.

However, many individuals do not qualify for government subsidies or wish to maintain a greater degree of control over who enters their home to provide services. For them the option is to hire their own healthcare provider either privately or through an agency.

You need to determine what type of healthcare provider is required, based on the necessary level of care, individual preferences, and financial means. Most often a home care worker that has had some basic care giving experience including performing personal care such as bathing and dressing, safe transferring or assistance with walking, and meal preparation and/or assistance with eating is required. If the person is confused or doesn't require hands on care, then you may be able to manage with a companion that is there to ensure comfort and safety. If you're looking for some basic household assistance with cleaning, laundry and so forth, then a housekeeper or cleaning service might meet your requirements.

You can hire either an individual healthcare provider or a homecare agency.

The advantages of hiring a private individual is a lower cost and you can select the exact worker that you want. Some disadvantages include the time needed to hire, screen and train the individual as well as being responsible for payment of payroll deductions and WCB contributions. Also, individual workers are usually not bondable, there is a lack of replacement if the healthcare provider is unavailable and you will have to provide ongoing supervision since there will be no supervisor monitoring quality of care provided.

The advantage of hiring a homecare agency is that all screening, training and supervision is provided by the agency and there is always a replacement available to insure continuity of service. Bonding, criminal record checks and insurance are taken care of by the agency, all workers are required to sign a Code of Conduct and Client Confidentiality Agreement and there is a quick response to provide initial service or change level of service as required.

The disadvantages of a homecare agency are less choice in the selection of the individual health care provider and the higher cost charged for this service.

When selecting a healthcare provider consider the following points:

- Convenience and time considerations
- The level of control over the selection of the healthcare provider
- Legal, insurance and employment issues
- Are there payment options such as invoicing, credit card payments or direct billing to an insurance company or trust company?
- Appropriate skill and personality match between client and healthcare provider
- Is there a dispute resolution process in place?
- The competency and reliability of potential healthcare provider
- Are you prepared to provide the communication, supervision and ongoing feedback to insure that your loved one gets the level of ongoing service that he or she deserves?

Selecting someone to come into your or your loved ones' home is an important decision. It is worth taking the time to carefully consider the type of service that you require. Ask your friends, your doctor or if you belong to a support group ask other members for recommendations of healthcare providers. Carefully check references. If you are considering hiring an agency make sure that they are bonded and members of the Better Business Bureau.

Taking the time to carefully select the right healthcare provider will pay dividends. It will help address your security and safety issues. It will also help insure that you your loved one has the appropriately trained healthcare provider who is kind, compassionate and caring.

By Sandy McElroy