

# Hiring a Home Care Worker

## Finding the right person to take care of your loved one

from: AARP

Your loved one probably wants to stay in her home as long as possible, but she could use help with everyday activities. One option is to find someone through an agency. Another is to hire someone yourself.

If that's what you decide to do, here's what you need to know.

### Finding Candidates

- Ask friends, neighbors, co-workers or other caregivers you know for referrals.
- Post a bulletin board ad at your place of worship, the library or local recreation center, or at a nearby senior center, adult day center or hospital.
- Look into a job placement program at a college that has a social work program.
- Run an ad in the newspaper or on a local website. Your ad should describe the job and its duties. Include a phone number or e-mail address, but don't give out your name or other personal information.

### Considering Applicants

- Write a detailed job description that you can share with applicants. Include all the tasks you will require, the hours and days of the job, and personal preferences with regard to driving and other transportation options. Also jot down questions you will want to ask to get a sense of the applicants' personality.
- Decide how much you're prepared to pay. If you hire someone directly, you need to look into how you will pay taxes and possibly a Social Security contribution. Check with the Internal Revenue Service for proper tax forms and instructions. See the IRS publications "Hiring Household Employees" and "Independent Contractor (Self-Employed) or Employee?" for details.
- Conduct the initial interview by phone. Ask about work experience, hours of availability, driving experience and special training with a condition such as Alzheimer's disease.

### Conducting an Interview

- Ask job candidates to bring a résumé or job history as well as names and telephone numbers for at least two references. If possible, make sure your loved one participates in the interview or at least has the opportunity to meet anyone you would like to hire.
- Describe to applicants your loved one's needs, health concerns, likes and dislikes. Outline the duties you expect her to perform. Be friendly but professional. Stick to questions that will help you determine if this person is a good match for the job — and for your loved one.
- Make sure to get the person's name, address, telephone number and Social Security number. Don't be afraid to ask for proof of identity, ideally a Social Security card. If not available, ask to see a driver's license or other photo ID. You can also ask if she has ever been in trouble with the law.
- Find out if she has any special training, such as working with clients who have dementia or other conditions. Also ask about her work history, including why she left her former job.
- Ask about her expectations of this position and why she is working in the home care field.

- Invite her to ask questions about the job and your expectations. Give honest answers.
- Be clear about salary and benefits, such as vacation and other time off. Head off any misunderstandings by addressing these issues directly.

### Checking References

- Always call references. A reference can confirm your feelings about a person or give you important information that you missed.
- If it's a former employer, ask about her punctuality and attendance as well as the precise nature of her work. Find out why the applicant left the position, whether there were any problems. Take notes on each applicant so you can refer to them when making your decision.
- Consider paying for a criminal background check. Contact your local law enforcement agency to find out how to do this.
- Consider hiring someone for a one-month trial period before you commit to hiring her permanently. Explain that this would be an opportunity to see if this is a mutually acceptable arrangement.
- Once someone accepts your job offer, put your entire agreement in writing. Include information about the trial period, job duties, salary, pay schedule, time off, start date and termination policy. Keep copies of this job contract signed by both of you.
- Try to be at your loved one's house for the first few days to familiarize the new caregiver with the routine. Periodically, you should drop by unannounced to check on how things are going.