

Hiring Qualified Staff for Home Healthcare

Home healthcare agencies provide services and support that help patients remain safely in their homes. Although most home health nurses take care of older adults with disabilities or provide hospice/palliative care, they also serve patients recently discharged from hospitals needing additional care.

Home health nurses provide clinical services in a patient's home, including monitoring vital signs, treating wounds or injuries, conducting tests, and administering medication. A variety of entities employ home health nurses including hospice and homecare organizations, community facilities, and hospitals. They carry out the treatment prescribed by physicians or nurse practitioners, and they may supervise certified nursing assistants or home health aides. Additionally, they may work with other care providers, such as physical/occupational/speech therapists, social workers or hospice/palliative care

professionals, psychologists, counselors, and chaplains.

Hiring qualified staff for these home nursing positions should include formal recruiting, interviewing, and hiring processes that are consistently applied to all applicants. The hiring organizations' policies on hiring, discipline, termination, and other human resource issues must conform to applicable federal, state, and local laws and requirements. Improper employment practices, such as insufficient background checks, can pose risks to patients and family members. Further, other oversights, such as failure to address sexual harassment by a patient, can pose risks to home health workers.¹

Following are various aspects of the hiring process to consider in your organization's efforts to hire qualified home health nurses and reduce liability exposure.

1

Verify applicants' education, licensure, and certifications directly when possible.* Require the applicants to produce original documents rather than photocopies. Be sure to follow state and federal laws in doing so.

2

Verify applicants' prior employment and references from previous employers or supervisors.

3

Conduct state and federal criminal background checks on all applicants, including felony activity. Additionally, search sexual offender, abuse, and neglect registries.

4

Be sure that your organization meets state requirements for obtaining criminal background information and requirements to report misconduct or other actions to licensing boards.

5

Check whether applicants have been excluded from federal healthcare programs by using the Department of Health and Human Services Office of Inspector General's [exclusions database](#).

6

If consistent with state law or organizational policy, require pre-employment drug testing for all applicants as well as policies related to random drug testing (if applicable).

* Licensure can be verified online whereas basic life support certification may require a card. However, many licensing groups are providing these documents online to download and print in lieu of issuing a card.

7

Require all applicants to be fingerprinted.

8

Verify applicants' U.S. citizenship or confirm their compliance with federal immigration laws.

9

Ask applicants if they have personal liability insurance coverage. If so, retain a copy of the policy in the individual's human resources file.

10

Review applicants' prior on-the-job training, including obtaining separate confirmation of the applicant's capabilities, to verify clinical competence.

11

Check applicants' motor vehicle driving records.

Endnotes

¹ ECRI. (2017, January 1). Home care: Staff-related risks. Retrieved from www.ecri.org/components/CCRM/Pages/QualRisk5_1.aspx

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