

# Choosing the Right Homecare Services: A Comprehensive Guide

Outliers exist in any scenario, but finding a person who prefers a cold sterile medical facility to their finely curated home is probably the proverbial needle in the haystack. Surveys and research show that most would prefer care delivered in the comfort of their own homes. Luckily, healthcare advancements have tuned this trending preference into a very tangible reality.

Medical treatments that were once confined to medical facilities have been freed into private spaces to help seniors across the nation. Technology can make a residential bedroom as medically advanced as a hospital room or doctor's office with the right machines and medical professionals to support.

Homecare is now more convenient and cost-effective than hospitals or skilled nursing facilities, while producing the same level of care at a greater value. In-home care covers a wide range of possibilities and approaches. With numerous options to consider when selecting the best homecare services for those in need, knowledge is the key to making an informed decision.

## Personal Care Services (PCS) Efficacy

For assistance with activities of daily living (ADLs), Personal Care Services are the go-to for a small helping hand. These services don't require a licensed professional or a physician's prescription, making them a more flexible solution for people trying to keep a dignified quality of life and a level of independence.

Personal Care agencies often provide:

- Bathing
- Dressing
- Grooming
- Medication reminders
- Meal preparation
- Light housekeeping
- Companionship
- Transportation to appointments
- Transferring from a chair, toilet or bed

This type of homecare is generally not covered by Medicare benefits, but other government-funded programs, such as Medicaid, can fill in the gaps to provide needed assistance for qualified beneficiaries. If the person in need of care has long-term care insurance, it may also cover some of these homecare costs. Personal non-medical care and skilled nursing care can be handled by the same agency, so additional services may be available to service the full range of client needs.

## **Understanding Home Health Agencies**

Home Health Agencies are essentially the mobile hospitals that bring skilled nursing and specialized services to a home setting. A physician would typically prescribe these services post-op or for the treatment of certain health conditions.

Home Health services may include:

- Nursing care
- Wound care
- Medication management
- Injections
- Physical therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Speech therapy
- Medical social work
- Bathing
- Dressing
- Grooming
- And other activities of daily living (ADLs)

Medicare covers home health services if the patient qualifies as homebound, needs skilled care, and the services are prescribed by a doctor. Medicare-certified is a designation that shows compliance with federal patient care quality standards. A state certified professional is required for these skilled services to ensure expertise and client safety.

Medicaid coverage is also available if requirements are met.

## **A Need for Hospice Care**

Hospice care continues the path down even more specialized services. This service model is designed to provide supportive and compassionate care for those approaching

the end of life. Differently from what is normally expected from traditional medical treatments, the focus is not on curing illness.

Hospice prioritizes keeping the client as comfortable as possible during their final days, knowing all avenues have been explored for recovery. Lessening the pain to the point where individuals can live out their remaining time with the highest possible quality of life is the primary goal. The peace of mind of loved ones and family is of high importance while of secondary concern.

Hospice care encompasses various aspects of support, including:

- Medical care
- Pain management
- Emotional and spiritual aid for both patient and family

Hospice staff and volunteers are experts in pain management, addressing the symptoms of terminal illnesses, and promoting comfort and dignity. Medicare and Medicaid offer a hospice benefit that covers most of the expenses of the terminally ill individual during their last six months of life.

To qualify for the Medicare hospice benefit, certain criteria must be met, including:

- Medicare Part A
- A life expectancy of less than six months
- Written agreement to forgo curative treatments

The Medicare hospice benefit covers various services, including:

- Skilled nursing
- Physician visits
- Therapy (physical, speech, or occupational)
- Medical social services
- Nutrition counseling
- Bereavement counseling
- The majority of prescription drugs required for symptom control and pain relief
- Short-term inpatient respite care to provide relief for family caregivers.

However, Medicare does not cover 24/7 hospice care at home, so Medicaid options may be available.

## **Choosing the Right Type of Care**

The decision between non-medical homecare agencies, home health agencies, and hospice care largely depends on an individual's current medical condition, needs and preferences.

1. If you primarily need a little extra assistance with maintaining a safe independent lifestyle with some ADL assistance, then a personal care service agency may be the best fit.
2. If you are fresh out of the hospital and a doctor thinks you need some skilled medical care for a swift sustained recovery, in a little ADL assistance in the meantime, a home health agency may be what you need.
3. For individuals facing terminal illnesses, which have exhausted all other treatment options, and have been diagnosed with less than 6 months to live, hospice care provides the specialized support focused on comfort and dignity during the final days.

## **Decisions To Make**

In conclusion, selecting the right homecare service is a weighty decision that should be researched thoroughly and guided by professionals. Based on the unique necessities and conditions of the situation, making the best choice may lengthen and elevate life substantially.

With factors like the type of care needed, agency certification, and available government programs to consider, an informed decision can ensure the highest quality of care while maintaining comfort, independence, and dignity for the loved one in their own home.

For better or worse, the more ill the patient, the more benefits tend to be available to help them on their journey. Medicare and Medicaid often work jointly when needed to get people the care they need, covered totally or at substantial discounts. Similarly, caregiver qualifications escalate as more expertise is needed for medical procedures and medication at home.

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