

◆ Who Can Help Me?

While the Alliance does not have the resources to assist new home care business get set up, there are a number of consultants that work in the area of assisting home care start-ups. The following individuals and companies are all members of the Home Care Alliance of Massachusetts and have extensive experience in the home care industry.

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Any arrangements you make with any of these consultants are strictly between you and the consultant. The Alliance receives no financial incentive for listing these consultants. This list is for informational purposes only and is not intended to be an endorsement of these consultants.

◆ What is the Home Care Alliance of Massachusetts?

The Alliance is a statewide trade association dedicated to promoting home care as an integral part of the healthcare delivery system. With more than 120 member agencies, the Alliance is the definitive voice for home-based care in this state. The Alliance advocates for appropriate state and federal regulations and helps members understand and comply with them. We provide educational programs to enhance members' functioning in the marketplace, group purchase programs to give member agencies a financial edge, networking opportunities to help member agencies succeed, and referral services through our Annual Resource Directory – more than 2000 mailed out state wide -- and our online directory of agencies at www.thinkhomecare.org. We also publish a consumer "Guide to Private Home Care Services in MA" that lists all of our member agencies that provide these services.



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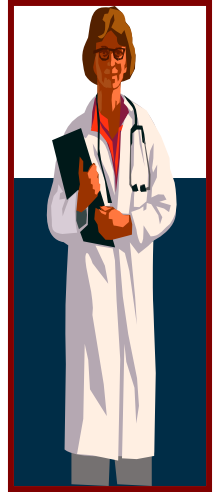
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So You Want to Start a Home Care Agency



Begin by Considering the Following:

◆ Why?

While home-based care is one of the fastest growing segments of the health and human services industries, it is a competitive market. Like any new business start-up, a new homecare agency requires a careful business plan that considers start-up costs, local demand and competition, workforce recruitment, and marketing.

◆ **Where do I start?**

New home care agencies must first consider the question of whether to focus on privately paid for care or accept third party payment from such insurers as the (federal) Medicare program and the (state) Medicaid (MassHealth) program. One popular strategy is to focus on privately paid care initially, and to expand to third party payment once the business is established.

◆ **What if I want to bill insurers, such as Medicare?**

Most insurers require that an agency be Certified that it complies with the Medicare "Conditions of Participation," which are established by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Information is available on the CMS home health web page at www.cms.hhs.gov/center/hha.asp.

The certification process is handled in Massachusetts by the Department of Public Health (DPH), Division of Health Care Quality. Mass DPH (617-753-8000) or <http://www.mass.gov/dph/dhcq> can provide prospective agencies with a package of information on certification. Note: a certification survey can not be scheduled until a start-up agency has a record of caring for at least ten patients. The certification process typically takes several months to complete.

◆ **If I want to focus on the private market, what regulatory issues and agencies must I be aware of?**

The Massachusetts Division of Occupation Safety (www.mass.gov/dos) enforces the

MA minimum wage laws and also licenses certain types of for-profit home care agencies (DOS includes home care agencies in its definition of "employment agencies").

The MA Department of Public Health requires that all agencies placing workers in the home conduct a criminal background check (called a CORI) of the worker upon hire. The MA Criminal History Systems Board www.state.ma.us/chsb administers the CORI system.

DPH also enforces regulations regarding patient abuse prevention, reporting, and investigation -- including a Nurse Aide Registry that agencies must access to screen all caregiving staff. Information about the Nurse Aide Registry is at <http://www.mass.gov/dph/dphorg2.htm>.

Agencies that are not certified can provide and bill for homemaker and home care aide services through the state-funded home care programs administered by the MA Department of Elder Affairs. Rules on this program are available on the EOEA website at (www.state.ma.us/elder).

◆ **How do I get Paid?**

Certified agencies can directly bill Medicare and Medicaid for services that meet program coverage requirements. Medicare bills for agencies in MA are processed by National Government Services (<http://www.ahsmcicare.com/default.asp>). Medicaid bills are processed by Maximus. Information about enrolling as a Medicaid MassHealth provider is available at <https://masshealth.ehs.state.ma.us/welcome.do>.

The Elder Affairs home care program conducts an open enrollment period each spring for agencies that want to contract to provide homemaker services for the next year. Information about this annual enrollment process -- called the Homemaker Notification of Intent to Contract -- is available on the EOEA website at www.800ageinfo.com/homemaker/Homemaker_NOI.cfm. Authorization and payment for the EOEA program is handled by EOEA's regional subcontractors, called Aging Service Access Points.

Other insurers -- including health plans and long term care insurers -- have their own authorization and billing requirements. For private pay services, rates and billing procedures are between the agency and client.

◆ **How do I get Patients?**

New agencies are entering a competitive market place in Massachusetts. There are more than 120 Medicare certified agencies, and at least as many private care agencies serving the state's 356 cities and towns. Strategies for attracting clients include traditional advertising, outreach to local community groups, physicians and hospitals. Because the marketplace is competitive, agencies must be able to deliver a quality product at a competitive rate. The Alliance annually publishes a Massachusetts Home Care Resource Directory and a Guide to Private Home Care Services that list member agencies. We also have an on-line directory at www.thinkhomecare.org.