

Midlands Business Journal

OCTOBER 28, 2016

THE WEEKLY BUSINESS PAPER OF GREATER OMAHA, LINCOLN AND COUNCIL BLUFFS

VOL. 42 NO. 44

Choosing the right home care company starts with careful research

by Lee Nelson

When a family decides it is time to bring a caregiver in for assistance in the home, it can become overwhelming to decide which home care company to use, said Michaela Williams, president of Care Consultants for the Aging.

“Depending on how you are paying for the care, what level of care is needed and how much control you want over the care, it is not uncommon to find yourself working with more than one home care company,” she said.

The level of care needed can be companions, CNAs, LPNs and RNs. Care Consultants publishes the ElderCare Resource Handbook that provides a listing of home care companies in the metro area. It can be purchased at the Care Consultants office and other locations around Omaha or can be viewed free online at www.careconsultants.com, Williams said.

“The home health care field is growing at a fast pace ensuring that different niches are being filled,” she said, “There are telemonitoring devices and emergency response systems that can be used as well as home modifications that can be made to enhance ones’ safety in the home.”

If you or your parent needs help in terms of light housekeeping, cooking, laundry, then a local companion care company is the answer, said Jim Laughlin, general manager of Home



Jaye Firmature McCoy, president of FirstLight Home Care.

Nursing with Heart.

“Always ensure the agency you settle on does background checks and employs licensed caregivers,” he said. “If your parent needs professional services such as skilled nursing and/or physical and occupational therapy, you’ll want to look for a home health care company.”

Medicare has a website that compares local companies with star ratings. These star ratings are based on successful patient outcomes and ratings are one through five stars, with five being the best, he said.

“Red flags with companies really don’t start showing up until after you’ve chosen a company, but you have the right to choose a different company whenever you want,” Laughlin said.

Jaye Firmature McCoy, presi-

dent at FirstLight Home Care in Omaha, said communication is one of the keys to every facet of the care process.

“The company you choose must be a dedicated partner and highly responsive to the client, the family and the caregivers,” she said.

Her company provides a secure, web-based tool that allows families to monitor the schedule, timeliness of the staff and daily details of their loved one’s care.

“Home care isn’t just for sick people anymore,” she said. “More and more people are recognizing the benefit of utilizing home care help as part of their overall plan to keep them healthy, safe, active and in their homes as long as

possible.”

Busy moms, post-surgery patients, pre- and post-maternity needs, travel companions and respite care are all part of the home care industry.

Kim Kleine, area director at CHI Health at Home in Omaha, said it is a challenge to navigate the complex system of providers and understand what is covered under Medicare and private insurance.

“The best thing you can do is use your resources,” she said. “Talk to your primary care provider and ask for their input and guidance on what questions you need to ask. Talk to friends and co-workers, as some of them may have experience in this area, or check in with the Better Business Bureau to check for complaints made against a specific agency.”

Kleine said you can learn a lot from their level of service over the phone, and this is a great opportunity to ask questions such as:

—How long have they been in business?

—Are they accredited by The Joint Commission?

—What was their last star rating?

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