

## ASK FOR HOME CARE

Depending on the circumstances, many people with ALS and their families decide it's useful or necessary to ask help from a home care employee. Even though this can be extremely useful for everyone involved, it can also provide several issues and challenges. Searching, hiring and managing someone who works very closely with yourself and your family, is never simple.

First off you better decide what kind of home care you need. You can decide this partially based on the progress of your disease, your preferences and financial means. Some people may need someone who can help them with personal care, provide them with help when moving from the wheelchair to the bed or the toilet, preparing meals and helping out in order to eat them. Others rather look for a household help to clean, wash, go shopping and pass through the groceries. Once the responsibilities are decided upon, it's advised to make a to do list or a list with a clear job description. When you hire someone this can be seen as a 'terms letter' to be read and signed by the home care employee.

Recruiting the right help is a challenge. Possible courses are: recommendations of a friend or acquaintance; suggestions by a church, clubs, organizations, support groups or other home caregivers; references from nurses, social workers or therapists; or ideas from a local hospital, care centers. Consider placing an ad online or on a bill board in local senior centers, universities, churches or nursing schools. Other possibilities are local employment opportunities agencies and social services organizations.

Some people will apply for subsidized government aid or get free or cheap help from nurses or others. Volunteer organizations can serve as an extra hand concerning help with transportation, home repairs and home delivered meals.

When you're interviewing a potential home caregiver, it's important to discuss your or your family member's possibilities, challenges and limitations and to clarify your expectations towards the caregiver, as well as the duties and responsibilities that go with the job.

When the job includes being driven to appointments and doing groceries, talk to the home caregiver about having a car and if so, about repaying the costs of the gas, or whether the caregiver can use your car.

Don't hesitate to bring up details. For example, should the caregiver bring his lunch or will you provide it? Talk about the day time schedule and specific hours which you think work best for you.

Before you employ a home caregiver, check his driver's and job license and make sure you get some references. Some people prefer a thorough background check. Make sure you and your family members are comfortable with your future employee.

When you're planning on hiring him, make sure everything is clear concerning the salary, days off, tardiness, illness and ending the contract. It can be an advantage to consult a tax consultant when you employ a home caregiver.

Remember that when you employ a caregiver, you involve a different personality into your household and that a happy and rewarded personal assistant has a positive effect on everyone involved.

It's useful to decide all the basic rules, show the caregiver around at home, go over the daily routines and every detail in order to have a successful day. It's important to often compliment the caregiver and give regular feedback. It's worthwhile to listen to their ideas and comments. Make sure you regularly keep him/her up to date of changes in the daily care program.

Keep in mind that the health and happiness of the person with ALS and the family are the ultimate goal. Be as flexible as possible when issues arise. Make sure the home caregiver feels at home at your place. And don't hesitate to openly talk about worries and problems when they arise.

Translation: **Sara De Roy**