

# About Home Health Agencies and Private Home Care Providers

## Home Health Agencies

Home health agencies provide **skilled nursing care and rehabilitation services requiring doctor's orders** to individuals who meet the Medicare definition of "homebound." In addition, **home health aides** are available to assist the patient with bathing, dressing, and light housekeeping in his or her home or apartment as long as they are receiving the skilled care. Home health agencies do not provide home health aide services if skilled care is not needed.

The nurses, therapists, and aides do not remain in the patient's home for extended periods of time. They stay only long enough to perform the specific services ordered by the patient's physician.

Home health agencies receive payment for the cost of their services from **Medicare, Medicaid, Veteran's Administration, or private insurance**. For individuals who qualify, Medicare will pay 100 percent of the cost for nursing care or therapy services. Medicare will also pay 100 percent of the cost of the home health aide if the doctor orders the service in conjunction with skilled care.

The Georgia Department of Community Health licenses home health agencies.

## Private Home Care Providers

Private home care providers offer **skilled nursing care (not covered by Medicare but still requiring doctor's orders), personal care assistance, and companion/sitter services** for extended periods. They do not offer rehabilitative services. Most agencies have a four-hour per visit minimum for services.

Nursing services are provided by registered nurses or licensed practical nurses under the supervision of a registered nurse. Personal care services include help with bathing, toileting, grooming, shaving, mouth care, dressing, and eating. Personal care assistants also help clients move about in the home or transfer between bed, chair, or toilet. Companion or sitter services include transportation and escort services, meal preparation and serving, and household tasks essential to cleanliness and safety. Depending on the service provided, state regulations require that the appropriate supervisor visit the client's home periodically.

Some private home care providers offer live-in personal care assistance or companion/sitters. Bonding is not required unless the in-home staff perform home management services that allow access to the client's personal funds. Most have answering services or can be reached 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The Georgia Department of Community Health licenses private home care providers. The primary types of payment for these services include private insurance and self-pay.

## Empowerline: Your source for information about services for older persons, individuals with disabilities, and caregivers.

Call Empowerline at **(404) 463-3333** whenever you need help finding services for older persons, individuals with disabilities, and caregivers in metro Atlanta, or visit **[www.empowerline.org](http://www.empowerline.org)**.

*Empowerline is a program of the Atlanta Regional Commission, the designated Area Agency on Aging for the 10-county Atlanta region.*

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