Home Health Care Agencies should, when working with clients:

- Offer free initial care consultations with potential clients. Remember, you are familiar with the process, but clients may be under stress and unfamiliar with the services that are being offered.

- Provide solutions that are best for the client, including referring the client to other agencies, if warranted.

- Have a process for 24/7 communications which is shared with clients at the onset of care.

- Follow up with the client, both after initial visits and on a regular basis, using staff contacts as well as third-party evaluations.

- Communicate the continuity of care plan, which is important client information; have a ‘back-up’ plan in place and assure prompt communication to clients in case of changes to client’s care plan. Safety is #1.

- Provide coverage for caregiver’s vacation or other time off, with a policy that has been clearly communicated to the client, and their family. This will help to prevent misunderstandings and confusion.

- Share the agency’s policy about the kinds of services caregivers are and are not able to perform with clients and their families.

- Perform drug testing and full comprehensive background checks, beyond the minimums of the state requirements for all potential employees.

- Offer regular training (both initial and ongoing) and competency assessments along with an employment verification process for each employee.

- Provide the caregivers an orientation and explanation of the needs of the client, in person if possible. Follow up with the caregiver after initial visit(s).

- Provide formal feedback on a regular basis to employees. Using a satisfaction survey administered by a third party helps to get accurate information from clients.

- Have clear boundaries; training staff that while they may be considered ‘part of the family’ of their client, they are not. The agency can set the tone and help staff learn how to balance the intimate relationship and trust within the scope of professional boundaries. Agencies also need to work with clients, and their families, when explaining the boundaries, so all involved in the relationship are comfortable.

(continues)
• Create a specific policy regarding personal privacy and financial issues. Be clear with staff and clients that tasks like balancing the checkbook or making bank deposits are not appropriate tasks for caregivers.

• Clearly communicate and explain how costs for staff time and services are determined; have a service agreement and plan of care for each client which is updated as needed to meet the client’s health needs.

Home Health Care Agencies business practices should:

• Have a regular quality outcome measurement process, an overall agency-wide performance improvement plan for staff as well as agency processes helps to ensure quality care. (i.e. Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) or OASIS (Outcome and Assessment Information Set), a key component of the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid (CMS) partnership)

• Have an outside accreditation, which is important to potential clients. Taking the time and paying for third-party evaluations and validation of processes, both specifics and overall procedures, is valuable. (i.e. The Joint Commission, jointcommission.org; ACHC, achc.org; CHAP, chapinc.org)

• Understand staff workloads and strive to remain realistic with potential clients when offering services.

• Recognize that data collection and security are hot topics for consumers. Agencies should be able to explain what data they are collecting and why, who they can to share it with and what steps they take to ensure clients’ information stays private. (i.e. HIPPA)

• Recognize that agencies have a role to play in the client’s future. Recording appropriate information about the client’s health care needs may make a difference in health care planning. Formal communication practices include procedures followed, information for audits as well as what information is available to other organizations who are also providing care for the client (or in the event the client moves to another agency or level of care).

• Aim to promote cooperation and be a good partner-in-care with others who provide care for client and their continuum of care (i.e. sharing health information with other agencies).

• Have an emergency preparedness plan in place for every client. Safety for both client and caregiver, as well as family members, is important. Be clear about expectations and be sure to include back-up plans for medical equipment.

• Ensure that staff are professionally active and complete continuing education courses beyond the state mandated minimums.

Additional Resources:

Minnesota
Minnesota Board on Aging
mnaging.org
Minnesota Department of Health
health.state.mn.us
Patient Bill of Rights:
health.state.mn.us/divs/fpc/consinfo.html
MinnesotaHelp.info
MNHelp.info
(Minnesota wide resource for public programs and services)
Minnesota HomeCare Association
mnhomecare.org
United Way
help line - call 211

North Dakota
North Dakota Department of Health
ndhealth.gov
North Dakota Department of Human Services
nd.gov/dhs
Centers for Medicare/Medicaid Services
cms.gov
National Association for Home Care & Hospice (NAHC)
nahc.org

Better Business Bureau of Minnesota and North Dakota
220 S. River Ridge Circle, Burnsville, MN 55337
651-699-1111 • ask@thefirstbbb.org • bbb.org