

Dear Task Force Co-Chairs and Members,

I wanted to share with you my family's experience in working with a home companion agency to have a live in caregiver caring for our father. We contracted with a home companion agency after our father, who suffered from dementia, fell and broke his hip, realizing that his care had become too much for our mom.

When our mother died, the caregiver continued to live with our father, and would often be alone with him several days at a time between our visits.

We regularly asked our caregiver to have replacements come in to relieve her so she could take a break. She always refused, saying she was fine, and didn't trust someone else to come in to do the job. She would go months on end without taking a full day off, only leaving for an hour or two when my sister or I were at the house. We couldn't quite understand how she managed it, or why, but our father seemed to be in good hands. When my sister arrived at his home unannounced one day and to her horror found him there alone, we began to understand. Through painstaking research, my sister pieced together supporting documentation that the caregiver may have left our father, confused and an extreme fall risk, alone not one, but dozens of times. For months it appears she had fabricated activity logs and misrepresented her whereabouts as well as his whereabouts.

To my knowledge, the supervisors from the caregiving agency had never paid an unannounced visit to check in on the situation at our father's home.

When we discovered our father alone, we informed the agency and asked the caregiver to leave our father's home. To our surprise, we learned approximately 2 years later that the agency did not terminate her employment. Rather than apologize for these incidents, the agency made claims that we were aware our father was being left alone, which we were not.

Over time we were alerted that several federal and states agencies have strong reason to believe that the caregiver used false identities to secure her job with the agency – something we suspect the agency may have known about. We learned much later that the agency appears not to have fully vetted her before hiring her. We have reason to believe that she still works for the agency to this day.

We are very lucky that our father came to no serious physical harm as a result of being left alone, or of what appears to be the agency's failure to fully vet or thoroughly supervise the caregiver they sent into his home. But people in the state of CT should not be relying on luck when they contract with an agency to provide caregivers for loved ones. There need to be regulations put in place to make sure agencies do background checks on potential caregivers and that those caregivers are carefully supervised. Additionally there needs to be a clear avenue of action if an agency is not living up to their responsibilities or responding to client concerns.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.
Sincerely, Molly Cantor